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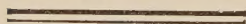








H U N K Y



# STRIDE OF MAN

by

*Thames Williamson*

"Here for once is a novel that really can be called an epic of America without error."—*New York Times*.

"Rich in information, vivid in incident, and vital in characterization, this novel should have a wide appeal to the most discriminating type of reader."—*Buffalo Times*.

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# HUNKY

BY THAMES WILLIAMSON

AUTHOR OF

"STRIDE OF MAN," "RUN SHEEP RUN," ETC.

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*God is with the worker.*

—OLD SAYING



# H U N K Y

## CHAPTER I

### I

MY BIG slow man could not remember when it was that he first began to work at the bakery.

One time he was piling up sacks of flour in the low dusty room which served the bakery as a storage place. He had picked up a sack, and was turning to put it in its proper place, when all at once he became aware of an unfamiliar presence in the room. This was unusual, because strangers generally went to the office at the other side of the building, where they could talk to Vogel himself. But this time it was different, it seems.

"Is your name Jencic?" inquired the newcomer.

There was no response to this question, whereupon the stranger took pencil and paper from his pocket, saying rather sharply,

"What's your name? It's Jencic, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the big man slowly, "my name is Jencic." His voice was low, and even, and very sturdy, like the voice of a river which has had to carve its channel out of rock, but is nevertheless

calm and strong, and not at all resentful of the crags that keep rising up along the way.

"Just how long have you worked here?" continued the stranger, rapidly scribbling something on his scrap of paper.

This was too much for Jencic. Ho! but it was an upsetting thing to be working away at your work, and suddenly look up and find a man there that you never have seen before, and him ask you questions and write down the answers right before your eyes. If Jencic had been expecting this visit he might have polished off no end of answers, but as it was he simply stood there, a gulping giant who could not produce even the tiniest kind of a reply.

"Come," said the stranger, tapping the paper with his pencil, "can't you tell me how long you've worked here? Try to think."

Slowly the big man put down his sack of flour. He had been holding it all this while, as if it were a matter of a hundred ounces instead of as many pounds. Ounces or pounds, it made little difference to Jencic, because he had as much strength as two or three ordinary men put together. So long as it was a question of handling sacks or barrels or boxes he got along very well indeed; but when it came to handling thoughts . . . well, the truth was that Jencic was not quite so quick-witted as some people seem to be. Slowly he put down his sack of flour, and then slowly he lowered himself until he



was sitting on it. This stranger had asked him a question, and although that question appeared to Jencic to be utterly lacking in value or sense, he began to belabor his brains for an answer. That is the kind of a fellow he was.

Just how long had he worked here, in this bakery of Vogel's? How long. . . . H'm. . . . Well, maybe it is easier to ask such questions than to find answers for them! After all, the memories a man has in his head are not so easy to pick up and arrange the instant some stranger takes a notion for you to do so. No, and when you try to get the head and tail of the business, it is not so clear what you have for your pains. What a man has lived through is something like a flour sack after the stuff has been emptied out—there it is, limp and lifeless, and if you should poke your head into it there is nothing to be seen . . . nothing but dimness . . . faint particles moving here and there . . . in a kind of mist. . . .

## II

Nevertheless, as he sat there wrinkling his forehead in the unaccustomed business of thinking, the sack of his memory began slowly to yield this and that familiar bit of detail.

How long had he worked in this place? A long time surely, because the affair of the hole in the sugar sack had occurred a long time ago. Jencic recalled it now. . . . The head baker, whose name

was Krusack, needed a sack of sugar for his pastry dough, so Jencic went to fetch it from the storeroom. It was a burden which might have squeezed a good many puffs out of a smaller man, but Jencic carried it up the stairs as a mother carries an infant. He came into the bakeroom with it, whereupon Krusack shouted at him,

"Hey! in the name of the Virgin, look what you're doing!"

Jencic looked around. The head baker pointed back the way he had come: a trail of sugar had followed Jencic up from the storeroom.

"Can't you see there's a hole in that sack?" demanded Krusack.

Jencic put down the sack. He examined it. Sure enough, there was a hole in it, just as Krusack had said.

"Stuff it up," commanded the head baker. "Here, take this."

Krusack tossed him a rag, but in the end it was the head baker himself who plugged the hole, while Jencic stood holding the sack by the ears—as if it might want to run away.

"There!" said Krusack, straightening up.

Jencic looked at what had been a hole, and then he looked at the head baker. Ah, but Krusack was a clever fellow, Krusack with his quick tongue and his nimble fingers, his snapping black eyes and swarthy face and long black mustaches. A man of marvels, as is becoming to a head baker. He

knew everything. . . . Nothing could deceive this Krusack . . . nothing. . . . Jencic remembered the night that the head baker ripped open a sack of flour, and when he had plunged his hands into it he began to growl and make faces.

"That's no good flour," he announced. "With such flour as this not even Saint Peter could make decent bread. Bah!"

This had disturbed Jencic. What! No good flour! How could that be! The flour looked all right to Jencic. It seemed to him to be just like the other flour, only that this sack was striped with yellow and green, instead of having a red bush printed on its side. Nevertheless, it must be no good flour, for there was Krusack scowling and rubbing it between his fingers, and saying it was no good, not even to make bread for hens.

Now clever ideas were not common to Jencic. He was a man to lift burdens, and fetch and carry, and do as he was told. Yet as he stood gaping from Krusack to the flour, and back to Krusack again, something came over him all at once, a notion from somewhere, perhaps from God.

"Well," he said, "the wagoners they better bring good flour, the same as before."

This remark caused Krusack to break into guffaws of laughter. The moods of the head baker were as agile as his fingers: a moment ago his face had been black and angry, now it was convulsed by his loud gusts of laughter. Jencic remained

sober. He waited for such time as it would please the merry one to explain.

The head baker quieted down after a while. "My Jencic," he said, "Vogel says you are an idiot, and sometimes I kind o' think so myself. What in the devil have the wagoners got to do with the quality of flour, tell me that. Bah, the millers are the ones that are to blame."

"But . . . but . . . it is the wagoners that we get the flour from, so . . ."

"Pssst!" said Krusack indulgently, "don't let it bother ye. Never mind. Vogel is the one that is to blame."

Jencic's mouth fell open. What! Vogel, was it! Well. . . . H'm . . . first it was the millers who were to blame, and now it was Vogel. . . .

"Vogel is buying a poor quality of flour," explained the head baker, "that is how it is. All right, let him the—the—the German! It will be not so good bread, that's all. Huh, and he used to brag about what good flour he uses. Well, he will never be able to say *that* again!"

With this the head baker gave each of his mustaches an abrupt twist and strode off, leaving Jencic to gaze upon the offending flour. Krusack's words had woven a net of gloom about the big man. For Jencic was a living part in that bakery: he derived nourishment from it, as from a placenta. Whatever attacked the bakery was likewise an assault upon him. Poor flour, eh! Vogel was no



longer using the best of flour, the finest quality he had been so proud of in former times.

"I use only the best of flour," Vogel used to say, indeed he had said that very thing the day Jencic first saw him. It was a long, long time ago, in that ancient misty period when the big man was an awkward overgrown boy. . . . He had been wandering for many weeks, going aimlessly here and there in the noisy streets, until his feet ached and he was faint with hunger. Then he smelled bread. He looked up. In front of his nose stood a house. It was summer and the window was up. Just inside the window he saw a short little man with eyeglasses and red hair, making bread on a huge flour-covered table. It was Vogel. "I use only the best of flour," said Vogel, and afterward he gave Jencic a job, lifting and carrying things about.

That was the way it had been in the long ago. Vogel had started his bakery in his dwelling house, using only the best of flour. His trade grew, and accordingly his quarters had to grow. A carpenter came and built another room on the side of the house. The next year an additional story had to be added, up under the roof. Later on there was another new room, a wider place for the bread wagons, and more space for ovens. Little by little the bakery grew, until it no longer resembled a dwelling house. Vogel's family no longer lived there. A big sign went up. "Vogel's Modern Bakery," it said.

Jencic had seen all this, and also he had seen how the little German baker took on air with the passing years, like one of his own puffy confections. Except that Vogel had stopped making pastry, and bread, too, for that matter. Instead of going on working like a sensible fellow, lo and behold! one night Vogel came into the bakeroom with a man who turned out to be Krusack. The newcomer looked about, waving his hands a good deal and talking to Vogel, then afterward he took off his coat and fell to work, just as if he had been making bread there all his life long! That was astonishing to Jencic. He could not take his eyes off the new man.

What of Vogel? All at once he became Mr. Vogel, Mr. Anton Vogel, not a baker but the proprietor of a bakery, and a modern bakery at that. He retired to a little room which he persisted in calling his office, and here he spent most of his time, wearing a very tight white collar, and continually cleaning his eyeglasses as he sat at his desk and fussed with his papers. And all the while he kept hiring more people: a girl to help in the pastry room, another delivery boy, a helper for Krusack. The ramshackle bakery kept filling up, like a bucket under a pump, turning out more bread and using more workmen in what Vogel was coming to call the "departments."

Meantime the little redheaded German clung to his office, marking up tablets and covering his

desk with slips of red and yellow cardboard. . . . He was like a child—or a lunatic—Jencic did not know which.

There had been a time when Jencic held his employer in deep respect, but not now. Jencic brooded over it all, and in the end he acquired a very clear and persistent contempt for Mr. Anton Vogel. It was all very simple to the big man. In his eyes a baker was something of a god; to abandon the making of bread and take to an office was therefore nonsense. Nonsense and more than nonsense—it was vice.

The advent of Mr. Anton Vogel, Proprietor, took something out of Jencic. It made him feel hollow and queer, like the time he ate a piece of spoiled meat and then had a vomiting spell. And yet it was not long before the void began to fill. Exit Vogel, enter Krusack. Vogel's disappearance from the bakeroom had got Jencic out of the pleasant regularity of his work habits, but Krusack quickly kneaded him back into position. The new man stepped into Vogel's shoes as neatly as you please, calling for flour and water and lard precisely as if he were Vogel, and Jencic did his bidding, just as he had done Vogel's. In less time than it takes to knuckle down a hundredweight of dough, Jencic had accepted the new man, this excessively capable Krusack who made the bakery go on as before, in spite of the little German's foolishness.

After all, it was the bakery that Jencic needed, not Vogel.

### III

All this was passing in Jencic's mind as he sat there in the storeroom on his sack of flour—then suddenly he rose to his feet and looked about. Well, where was that man? Yes, where had he gone to, this stranger who had said to him, "How long is it you have worked here?" The fellow had been right by the stairway a moment ago, and now he was gone and Jencic was alone in the storeroom, surrounded by his sacks of salt and sugar and flour, his rows of lard in casks, his crates of raisins and eggs, all where he himself had piled them. The wagoners brought all these materials to the storeroom, and as soon as they had unloaded what they had, it was for Jencic to arrange things. Always he piled his sacks in the same way, ears to the wall and butt ends out, one sack above the other, ten high, always ten high, no more, no less. Vogel said to him one time, "Here, Jencic, you pile those sacks with the ears out, then they will be easier to pick up when it comes time to carry 'em upstairs to the bakeroom. Do you hear me?"

Jencic looked at him, but he said nothing, and he kept on piling the sacks according to his custom. It was true that Mr. Vogel owned the bakery, and it was likewise true that the little redhead paid Jencic six dollars a week by way of wages; never-



theless a man who prefers loafing in an office to making bread certainly deserves as little attention as it is possible to give him. Besides, what if sacks are easier to handle when they are piled ears out! The devil, Jencic was not a baby. Nor a cripple, either. No, he was a giant of a man, with arms like young oak trees, and monstrous hands. Only let one of those sacks of flour imagine it could resist him and it would find itself yanked out of place fast enough! When Jencic took hold of a thing and pulled, something had to give way; and so he kept on piling his sacks to suit himself, ears to the wall and butt ends out, always the same way, day in day out, always the same way. . . .

All at once there was a shout. His head jerked up. He came out of his dream, startled and very much confused. There was a second shout, loud and imperative, the shout that comes out of the throat of a commander. Ah, it was Krusack, calling to him from the bakeroom.

"Hup!" cried Jencic. That was the sound he always let out of him when he wanted to let the head baker know he was coming.

He went up the crooked little stairs which led to the bakeroom.

#### IV

The bakeroom was a long rectangular affair, with the ovens at one end and the mixing troughs at the other. Krusack had just turned a sack of

flour into his vat when Jencic shambled up to him.

"Where did he go to?" said Jencic.

"Where'd who go to?"

"That man."

"What man?"

"The one that was here."

"Nobody been around here."

Jencic looked about the bakeroom, his face wrinkling a bit. "There was a man here," he said again.

"You been drinking," observed the head baker lightly.

"No."

"You're drunk."

"He had a gray coat, with a star right here," and Jencic pointed to his breast.

Krusack straightened up, his black eyes gleaming with interest.

"What! A star! The devil you say!"

"Yes."

"The devil!" repeated the head baker, stroking his mustaches. "What did he want?"

"He says to me, 'Is your name Jencic?' and I said, 'Yes, it is.' Then he says, 'How long have you been working here?' "

"Well?"

Jencic lifted his shoulder, the palms of his big hands turned out a bit, "I do not know. After a while I looked for him, but he was gone. Where did he go to?"

“Do I know?” grinned Krusack, his teeth white against his dark face and black mustaches. “But if he had a star on he was a police, so it is well for you that he went away. Maybe he forgot to arrest you because he was surprised anybody should be as slow in the wits as you are!”

“He said I must think,” said Jencic, “so—”

“Did he!” exclaimed the head baker, pretending to scowl. “Well, listen to Krusack and you shall hear something else than that! Do not be afraid. It is free. I won’t charge you for it. My advice is just this: don’t think! It is very bad for anybody to think, unless they know just how to do it. It is like making bread, you had better be an expert at it, or else let it alone altogether. Do your work, you big horse, then you will be happy. You are floundering around in the mist, but you get along all right at that. If you should get started to thinking—well, you might come out of your fog and maybe see more, but you wouldn’t be so well off as you are now, so don’t try it. All the thinking people have got plenty of trouble. Look at me, for instant—you would not believe it if I told you what I suffer. All right, now, go bring me a tub o’ lard. I am late with my dough, all on account of having to give you some good advice.”

Jencic went for the lard.

## CHAPTER II

### I

JENCIC worked nights, laboring from early evening until the next morning, six days in the week.

A long stint? Jencic did not think so, or rather he did not think about it at all. He simply did his work, first this and then that and afterward another task, according as he was told. Time did not drag. On the contrary it slipped by in the easiest and most natural fashion imaginable, until before he knew it it was time to carry the warm crisp loaves down to the loading platform, and help the drivers load their wagons. One by one the wagons were piled high with bread, one by one the drivers mounted their seats and clucked to the horses, and drove off. The wagon wheels always made a rumble as they passed over the cobblestones, and it sometimes appeared to Jencic that this was the signal for the world to awaken, for no sooner did the bread go forth into the city than there were voices and faint stirrings, as of a numerous population awakening and preparing to satisfy its hunger with the fresh loaves that Krusack and his helpers had made for them. The city was stirring, the night fleeing away, the new day approaching on swift feet.



Then the little whistle in the engine room blows shrilly. The night is over, and the bread made. Time to quit work, until another evening. Every one gets his hat, or his coat, or whatever he has, and sets out for home. The bakery has bound them together for a few hours, but now they scatter in all directions, the head baker, the engineer, the oven man and the helpers and the rest of them, each going his own way.

Most of these people go quietly, but this is impossible for the three girls who work in the pastry room. No, they cannot walk along sedately. It is absolutely necessary for them to trip along lightly and gayly, and keep putting their heads together, as if they are sharing some delicious joke with one another. They had the air of making fun of the world, those three girls.

Behind them came Jencic, shambling homeward on his big feet. But he paid no attention to them. He was not a ladies' man, like Pete the second baker, or one or two of the wagoners that worked for Vogel. Jencic was not a man to make pranks with girls. Such creatures were beyond his understanding; likewise, they were beyond his interest.

Nevertheless he had his eyes on them this morning. Because they were eating a pie as they sauntered along the street. It was a hot fresh pie, an apple pie, and they had sneaked it out of the bakery without Vogel being any the wiser. That was bad, stealing a pie like that. Jencic did not do such

things. He was honest. Stupid perhaps, but honest. In all the years that he had worked at the bakery he had never taken anything. Of course he had nibbled at a cruller now and again, or maybe the end of a broken loaf of rye, but as for carrying off a salable pie, no, he had never done such a thing as that. As he plodded along behind the girls he said to himself,

“They shouldn’t do it.”

The three girls were becoming hilarious. No doubt they were happy to be done with work for another day, and besides it was a fine morning, the sun yellow and warm, the air calm, really a spring day, however tardy the calendar might be. At any rate the girls began to laugh and skip, pushing one another and snatching at the pie, until suddenly what was left of it fell in the gutter.

That decided Jencic. In the ordinary course of events a stolen pie could never have forced a remonstrance out of him, but to waste that pie—to let it fall in the gutter—

“Teena!”

The three girls halted and turned round. Why had Jencic called to Teena, instead of to one of the others? He could not have said. Very possibly it was because of the color of her dress, that bright clear red which she wore so often, and which this morning stood out as the only vibrant hue in all that drab street. Her companions might wear dull clothes, but not Teena. Always she went to work

as to a dance or a fair, gay and buoyant, insistent that she look well and have a good time. Lithe and pretty she stood there, her head cocked impudently to one side. She looked at Jencic with mockery in her face.

"Well, what is it you have to say?"

Jencic had intended to reprove her for stealing pies and wasting them in the bargain, but when she looked at him like that his muteness returned. She stood waiting for him to speak. How intensely black the sunlight made her hair, so curly, so full of life. And how red her lips were against the transparent brown of her skin. But she was so bold, so disconcerting . . . Jencic was a bit afraid of her. He could do nothing but mumble,

"You . . . I . . . uh . . ."

The girls fell to laughing. They put their heads together and mimicked him, trying to make their voices as gruff as his,

"You . . . I . . . uh . . . ha ha ha ha ha . . . you . . . I . . . uh."

Giggling and jesting they went on their way. Jencic followed along behind, silent and calm. Those girls were making fun of him, but what was to be done about it! Was a man to fly into a passion every time that people snickered at him! In such a case he would spend most of his time in a fit of temper. Bah, if people made fun that was their concern. Let the girls laugh.

Teena's friends turned off on a side street. She

went on alone, Jencic plodding along behind. That red dress of hers held his eyes. He might as well look at it, while he could. Presently she would come to the church on the corner; she would turn to the right and Jencic would turn to the left, and after that there would be only the gray street, lined with grimy shops and tenements. Even now she was vanishing, taking her glory with her. . . .

Jencic paused at the corner, looking after her. Then suddenly there was the sound of bells. He looked up. In front of him stood the church. It went towering up into a steeple. There were bells up there, and now they were pealing and ringing. . . . Strange that they should ring at this time every morning, just as he was passing. It was almost as if they were calling to him as he went by, calling to him and telling him things, striving to unlock a box of ancient memories . . . bright dresses such as Teena wore . . . a priest making signs with his hand . . . a vague recollection of much traveling . . . darkness and sudden fear . . . a long hunger . . . loneliness . . . loneliness. . . .

His big face had begun to quicken, then the bells stopped ringing. No more images came to him. His shreds and wisps of memory drifted on and away. . . . Only the present was real. He was a worker in the bakery, and now after a night of labor he was on his way home to eat and sleep.

## II

He lived not far from the church, in a huge untidy house which served as a roosting place for all sorts of odds and ends of people. The names of a few of his fellow lodgers were familiar to him, yet he had no friends among them. Jencic did not make friends easily. This was probably the best way. The world was a labyrinth beyond understanding; there was a great deal of bad in it, and a great deal of danger also, especially for folks who were not clever. It was better to live to one's self, hence Jencic had made it a custom to enter the house and go up to his room without speaking to any one, except perhaps the landlady, if he should meet her on the stairs.

Once in his room he opened the lower drawer of his commode and took out as much food as he intended to eat. He rarely ate in restaurants. Restaurants are expensive, and if your weekly wage is six dollars a week you must eat with economy, especially if you are to save anything. This is why Jencic bought what he needed, and then brought it home and ate it in his room. He ate hearty things, being a large man and a worker besides. Sometimes he had corned beef, or pressed ham, or dried fish, or something else that was nourishing and did not cost too much. To-day he had bread and onions and a generous chunk of cheese, made in a bladder and allowed to stand a long while. It was better that way.



When he had eaten he took off his shoes and lay down on his bed. In an instant he was asleep; in what appeared to him as another instant he was awake again. Going to sleep was a very queer thing, and very wonderful, also. It was magic, something like the tricks of a medicine vender that Jencic had seen in the street one time. Suppose you are tired. You lie down. All at once you wake up, no longer tired. So it was with Jencic, at any rate. He never dreamed.

Late in the afternoon he returned to work, going the way he had come, down past the church and then following the street as it curved to the right, always the same route, whether he was going to work or going home to eat and sleep. It was a pleasant life, orderly, placid, monotonous. If only there had been no such thing as Saturday night. . . .

### III

There was no sale for bread on Sunday, hence there was no bread-making on Saturday night.

Jencic dreaded this break in the even flow of his life. He would have preferred to work every night in the week, and because he could not he was ill at ease, and sometimes downright wretched. Saturday evening brought to his stomach a dull ache which no amount of bread and cheese could vanquish. He went out into the street, but there was nothing to do. The sole of his left shoe had begun

to flap loosely. There was a cobbler handy, yet Jencic did not go to him. Another time would do, some work day when things were not so gloomy as now, and he was better able to stand the cobbler's high charges.

He walked down the street to the bakery, as if to make sure that there was no work going on there. A needless precaution on his part. The place was dark and silent, no smoking chimney, no bustle, no smell of new bread. It was like a sick thing.

Jencic turned and shambled back up the street, listless and dull. An immense inertia had descended upon him. He tried to get interested in the food displayed in this and that shop window, but no,—what comfort is there in looking at a spiced ham or a long sleek sausage when it is Saturday night! Not even the window of the steamship agency was worth looking at. As for those pictures of great vessels, and queer flags of green and red and yellow, what was the good of it all! It meant nothing. It was nonsense.

But it was directly in front of the steamship agency that Jencic met with an adventure that night. A great many people had collected there. He was picking his way along, when without warning he came face to face with a certain man. Jencic had never laid eyes on this person before, and yet there was something vaguely familiar about him. No doubt the stranger thought the same about Jencic, for he gave the big man a sharp look and said

something to him. What did he say? Jencic did not know, because the words were not English, but something else. Like the face of the stranger these words were dimly familiar to Jencic, and yet he could not say what they meant. The man spoke again, and held out his hand.

That gesture decided Jencic. He drew back. No, he did not make friends so easily as all that, especially in the street.

The man who had spoken to him shrugged his shoulders and walked on. Jencic gazed after him, wrinkling his forehead like a person who is trying to recall something. He saw the strange man board a street car. The car moved on, farther and farther down the street, carrying the man out of Jencic's life. . . . At last the street car disappeared beyond the horizon, Jencic's horizon, the jagged uncertain line which delimited the neighborhood where he lived and worked, and beyond which there was nothing. . . .

Jencic came out of his trance. He stopped looking at the spot where the street car had disappeared, and began to look at the steamship agency. They were all strangers there, but next door was the notion shop, run by Putinsky, a frail little Jew that he knew very well indeed. Putinsky was standing in front of his establishment, looking for customers. When he saw Jencic come toward him he rubbed his hands and smiled.

"You want your quart now?" he said softly. "It is twenty cents cheaper than last week."

"Did you see that man?" asked Jencic. "He spoke to me, then he got on the street car before I—"

"Come get your bottle," said the Jew. "I got it ready for you."

"Who was he, anyhow?" persisted Jencic. He was troubled.

"Who?"

"The fellow that started to talk to me. He wanted to shake hands with me."

"Oh! Well, he was somebody or other. But what do you say, shall I wrap up the bottle, or will you put it in your pocket?"

Jencic did not answer. He stood blinking for a thoughtful moment, then he walked on up the street, leaving Putinsky in amazement at such manners. But Jencic was not intent upon manners, he was intent upon the stranger who had spoken to him, and afterward held out his hand, like an ancient friend, or perhaps a countryman. . . . All at once Jencic heard his name called. He whirled about, thinking maybe the man had come back; but it was Krusack, not the stranger, Krusack in holiday attire, including white shirt and collar, a huge purple necktie, glistening shoes, and a thick gold watch chain across his middle.

"So it's you!" cried the head baker, and he shook Jencic by the hand, as if he had not seen him for

months, or perhaps years. "Well, well, well!"

As for Jencic, he returned this handclasp gladly. It was a happiness to meet somebody he knew on a lonely Saturday night like this, and besides,—Krusack was a personage.

"Meet a friend o' mine," smiled the head baker, waving toward a silent man at his elbow. Then to Jencic, "Well, well, well! So it's you!"

"Yes," said Jencic.

"Well, what's wrong, if it's you?" demanded Krusack. "Have you been to a funeral, or going to one! Come on, don't have such a gloomy face. This is our night off. Let us celebrate. Wait till we come to an alley and have a good drink, then we shall promenade up and down the street. But the devil! You got on your working clothes, ain'tchu! Go home and put on a white shirt, and shave, too. That is the way it is done in America. Come on, we will wait for you."

They went to Jencic's house, Krusack and his friend waiting in the street while the big man went up to his room to clean up.

Krusack had said for him to shave, and so he got water and made some lather, after which he took up his razor and began to maneuver before the mirror. This was a small affair, indeed it was only a remnant of a broken glass, Jencic's portion being a triangular piece which was held against the wall by small nails. There were a number of worn spots in this mirror, so that you had to go about it just



so if you were to see yourself satisfactorily. A small person, such as a girl or a child, might have seen their complete countenance at one look, but Jencic's face had been laid out on the same generous scale as his body, and accordingly he had to move it here and there before the glass, surveying himself as a kind of panorama—an eye, a cheek, a hairy chin, and so on to the end.

After he was through shaving he felt of his face with his fingers, trying to estimate the area he had skipped. He gave himself a last long look in the mirror . . . strange that he should get to thinking of that man again . . . perhaps it was because the man in front of the steamship office was a general duplication of Jencic himself . . . the same steady gray eyes, set far apart . . . the same blond hair . . . the same high cheek bones, and insignificant nose . . . a stolid sober face . . . well, it might be. . . .

A shout brought him out of his reverie. He stuck his head out the window. Krusack and his friend were looking up. The head baker began to make Xs and Ys with his arms, shouting as he did so,

"Come on! Hurry up! Come on!"

"All right," said Jencic, and drew back his head.

He put on his necktie, found his hat and went down to them.

"I thought you had went to sleep," said Krusack reprovingly. "Come on now. Hullo! why, you didn't put on your white shirt!"

Jencic glanced at himself, then he looked at the head baker. He did not know what to say.

"What was you doing up there so long?" demanded Krusack. "Even for a slow poke like you it was a long time, huh!"

"I was just thinking," said Jencic.

They had set off down the street, three abreast, the great Krusack in the center.

"So!" he exclaimed, "you was just thinking, was you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I thought I tole you not to think! And here you are at it again!" He turned to his friend with a wagging head, "This Jencic here, he is a great fellow, with his thinking and all!"

The friend smiled without speaking. He seemed to be a silent man, somewhat like Jencic; but as for that, Krusack could talk enough for three, so it was a matter of no consequence. The head baker chattered away and his companions grinned and said "yes" or "no," until they came to an alley. Still three abreast they marched into the darkness.

"Halt!" said Krusack, and with a great flourish he pulled out a bottle. "Now we are going to forget we are wage slaves for a minute. Every fox takes care of his own tail. That is a proverb among us Slavs. Jencic, do you know what is a proverb?"

"No."

"Well, no matter. I am just fooling. Here,

you must be the first one to drink, so you will stop thinking!"

Jencic took a long pull at the bottle.

"Take another one," said Krusack. "Don't be afraid. It is good stuff. My brother-in-law makes it. He knows how."

Jencic took another swallow and passed the bottle to Krusack. The head baker passed it to his friend. Afterward he took a few swallows for himself, then they rested for a moment. Presently Krusack seized the bottle by the neck.

"Let us kill it," he suggested strongly. "There is not enough in it to bother carrying around. Jencic, it is your turn."

Krusack guffawed to see him drink so heartily, and when Jencic took the bottle down from his mouth he looked at the head baker and grinned a little, a weak, loose, unnatural grin.

"Don't bother to grin!" said Krusack. "Laugh right out, why don't you! We will get some more to drink, so you can laugh. It is a fine thing to laugh. Whenever anybody can laugh they forget what they are, which is a damned lucky thing for them. Come on, now, we will go get some more, then we will go walking in the street and make jokes. Only be careful when you go by the police by the church, because he is a Irish wop and always looking for a chance to arrest Americans. All right, forward!"

And so they joined arms and went for more

liquor, Jencic buying one bottle and Krusack's friend another, and when these had gone the way of the first they went into the lighted crowded street, wandering wherever their numb feet might lead them, and not caring very much what direction it was, so long as it was along the noisy street, the Saturday night street. Jencic's head was in a muddle, yet it was a pleasant muddle. The idle bakery, that look in Teena's eyes, the strange familiar man who had stepped out of Jencic's past and then gone away again,—all these disturbing matters passed out of his mind. His horizon sagged back into position, closer and closer up to his bloodshot eyes, until the world was this street in which he went stumbling and grinning, a highway thronged with trampling feet, and a multitude of blinding lights, and a sea of faces billowing up and down, faces gay with a noisy dizzy sameness, milling and heaving and jostling. Jencic's great head rolled on his shoulders as he laughed and laughed. . . .

## CHAPTER III

### I

BUT on the heels of Saturday came Sunday and the bakery again, and after that a succession of work periods, calm busy nights following one another like so many beads on a string, they were so regular, and so alike.

Then a shadow appeared.

The wagoners had fetched a mountain of flour to Jencic's storeroom. The big man helped them unload, and when they had gone he spit on his hands and began to bring order out of the mess, piling the sacks back out of the way, ears to the wall, butt ends out.

Krusack came down from the bakeroom, and Jencic straightened up to pay attention.

"Old Vogel's got some crazy idea in his noodle," began the head baker, pulling thoughtfully at his mustaches. "He wants to know how much of this stuff can be piled in the bakeroom . . . H'm . . . most of it, maybe. What d'ye think?"

What did Jencic think? Store all this flour and salt and sugar and lard in the bakeroom! What for? Didn't it belong here! How could it belong anywhere else!



"Well," said Krusack, "I don't know what he's up to, but—"

A man had just entered the storeroom, coming in through the alley door as quietly as a cat. He had an air of authority, with a bit of insolence thrown in by way of flavor. And what did he do but sit down on a pile of flour and silently examine Krusack and Jencic with his sharp eyes, as if he were estimating their weight.

Jencic was rendered somewhat uneasy by this circumstance. It seemed that mysterious strangers were becoming quite common in his life. But fortunately for Jencic he observed that Krusack was not troubled by the appearance of the newcomer. No, the head baker stood stiffly erect in his white apron and undershirt, stroking his long mustaches and giving the fellow some very level looks out of his black eyes. Jencic experienced an immense satisfaction that Krusack was there to help bear the ordeal of that man's scrutiny.

"Now then," began the intruder, as he pointed a brisk finger in the direction of the head baker, "your name is Krusack, isn't it?"

"What of it?" said Krusack.

"I represent the Anti-Alien League," continued the newcomer. "We are getting a line on all the unassimilated foreigners in the city, as for example, who is a citizen and who is not, and so forth. It is the purpose of our League—"

"Such a league has nothing to do with me," broke in Krusack, with that decisive manner of his. "I am eleven years in this country, and what is more I am a citizen and a voter to boot. I have papers to show for it. But I don't have to show those papers to you, you whoever-you-are, coming in here like this."

Jencic looked at his friend in open-mouthed admiration. Ho! but that was the way for a head baker to talk, straight out from the shoulder and big as you please. What did this whoever-he-was think of that for an answer, what Krusack had just said to him!

"Very well," said the stranger. "But how about you?" and he turned to Jencic.

Jencic did not answer. He did not understand this talk, any more than he understood Putinsky's chatter when the little Jew talked to his family at the back end of his store.

The stranger took a notebook from his pocket and ran his fingers through it. "What's your name?" he demanded.

"My name is Jencic."

"Jencic? How do you spell it? Oh, yes, here we are. You are a Polack, eh? Well, Mr. Jencic, we have no record that you have been naturalized. Have you taken out citizenship papers?"

Jencic had nothing to say, whereupon the stranger frowned and turned to the head baker,

"What's the matter with him? Can't he speak English?"

"Why not?" exclaimed Krusack, lifting his eyebrows, and afterward smiling out of the side of his mouth.

"I can speak English," said Jencic.

"Then answer my question, please. Have you any papers to show that you are a citizen of the United States?"

Krusack seemed to be very much amused at that. "Haw, haw, haw," he laughed, "you are full of jokes, ain'tchu! Here you come butting in here with a book and tell this fella he is a Polack—when he is not a Polack at all—and how he is not naturalized, then you ask about his papers. Well, if you know so much, how is it you can't tell if he has papers or not!"

"You're a bold fellow, aren't you?"

"Sure! That is because I am a citizen of this country, where we are all of us equal with each other. By the way, are you yourself a citizen?"

"Here, here," said the stranger, flushing, "no foolishness. I want to know if this man has papers."

"Of course he has papers," retorted Krusack, "just the way I have myself. He is a citizen, too, so don't try picking on him. He is a friend of mine, don't forget that!"

The man rose to his feet. He dusted the back of his clothes.

"All right," he said quietly. "I am just giving you warning, that is all. Later on there is going to be a dragnet to round up every one that cannot show citizenship papers. This country is losing patience with aliens who cannot make a contribution to American democracy, so if your friend cannot show papers he is apt to get into trouble."

So saying he went out the door, Krusack calling after him,

"Hey! I give you some warning yourself. If you have no papers, you will get into trouble, you Dago, you!"

Jencic was standing in the middle of the store-room, his forehead wrinkled in mild anxiety.

"What papers?" he murmured. "I got no papers to show. Will the police make some trouble for me?"

"Naw," said Krusack easily. "Say, you leave it to me. I know how to put a hub in that fella's wheel. Listen, I am a friend to O'Brien, the councilman. I help elect him. I do favor for him, so he does favor for me. For two dollars O'Brien will get some papers for you, just what you need. To-morrow morning we will go see him, then this wop cannot make trouble for you. But now I must get back to work, it is almost time to put in the pans. Do not forget, to-morrow morning, maybe at ten o'clock, by the alley—you know. Now bring up all this stuff you can and pile it in the bake-

room. Vogel wants it that way. He has some crazy idea in his head."

## II

They met at ten o'clock the next morning. Krusack motioned his friend into the alley.

"Everything must begin right," he declared, and produced a flask.

But Jencic would not hear of it. He pulled out a bottle of his own. "No," said he, "we will drink on me. I brought my bottle. Last time you was the one to treat. Now I will treat."

"All right," and Krusack took a hearty drink. "Ah, that is good stuff. Where did you get it?"

"From Putinsky."

"So! From Putinsky! Well, maybe it is not so good as I thought it was. I never got good booze from a Jew yet. But come, we must go."

They set out together, Krusack talking.

"After all, maybe it is just as well that this Dago come around, because in speaking of brass tacks you should really be a citizen. It is like belonging to the union; it helps you out in a lot of holes, especially when you get in trouble. So it will be worth your two dollars."

Jencic nodded. Two dollars was a lot of money, but if it was to keep the police from making him trouble, why . . . Besides, Krusack said it was the thing to do. Jencic had the money with him; he did



not believe in banks, so he kept his wealth in a leathern belt, strapped around his waist, under his shirt.

"That's the city hall," said Krusack presently. "It's a big place, as you can see. O'Brien stays there. Him an' the others run that whole place. Pretty fine, eh? I tell you he is a big man. He has a pull, and he lets me use it. A pull is a good thing. It speeds up things, like yeast when you make bread. Without pull it would take a long time to do something, maybe a year. Come on, follow me where I go, I know the way."

They went up the broad steps and into a hall where there were a great many people smoking and spitting and lounging about. The head baker went forward without hesitation, Jencic behind him. In a little while they reached a certain glass door, and went in. Krusack spoke to a boy, and the boy took them to a room where there was a man with a great paunch and a cigar, looking out the window. The head baker promptly shook hands with this man.

"I brought a friend o' mine along," said Krusack genially. "They are trying to make trouble for him, so he will get out of the ward before election. But my friend knows you are the man to vote for, so I told him for two dollars fee you could get his papers, and then everything will be all right."

"Sure thing," said O'Brien, and turned to give directions to a young woman at another desk.

Jencic stood in the middle of the floor, saying nothing. The councilman and Krusack kept talking to each other. Then the papers appeared, and Jencic handed over his two dollars.

"Good," said the head baker, smiling at O'Brien. "This is the way I told him it should be. I said to him, you must become a citizen, then you can vote for councilman. Until you are a citizen, I told him, you are not in America, you are what you might say *under* it."

The councilman laughed until his big paunch seemed on the point of rolling off him.

"Purty good, purty good. Yes, that's about right. If you are not a citizen you're underneath, all right . . . and sometimes you are anyhow—if you are not for O'Brien."

Krusack and the councilman laughed together. Jencic smiled a little. He did not know what it was that was so comical, but no matter, he had paid his two dollars and had his papers safe in his pocket. The police could not make trouble for him now.

They turned to go, Krusack and the new citizen.

"By the by," said the councilman, "I suppose he can read the Constitution, can't he?"

"Sure," grinned the head baker, and when they were out of the building he began to chuckle, "O'Brien he likes to spring that. It is one of his

jokes. Haw haw haw haw! Remember you can read the Constitution, if anybody should ask."

"The Constitution?" said Jencic slowly. "What is that?"

"Oh, well, it's not so easy to explain," was the reply, "but it is the way they put things together in America, something like the formula I mix up the bread by. But as for you knowing it, it won't do you any good, so don't worry. In a bakery it is only the head baker that should know the formula for bread, and in politics it is only the head men that have to know about the Constitution."

Jencic nodded.

"Now you are a citizen," exclaimed Krusack, as they walked along. "You belong here and nobody can run over you. If anybody makes trouble for you, stand right up to him and tell him not to forget who you are. All this country is part yours now."

A slow smile spread in Jencic's face. The big slow man was pleased. He was grateful to the head baker, and although he could not say so there was something he could say.

"Let us have another drink," said Jencic.

Krusack promptly turned into the next alley. They drank from Jencic's bottle.

"By the beard of the Saint!" observed the head baker, "that is not so bad. Where did you say you got it?"

"From Putinsky."

"Oh, from Putinsky, eh! Well, a black cow can give white milk, and this is a case of it."

### III

Jencic went home. He climbed the stairs to his room, thinking of it all. Slowly he took off his shoes and sat down on the bed. The springs creaked; they sagged nearly to the floor, because this new citizen of America was a heavy man. There was nothing ethereal about Jencic.

He took out bread and meat and began to eat, munching slowly, the bread in one hand, the meat in the other. . . . Presently he put down his food and wiped his fingers on his pants. Then he carefully reached into his pocket and drew out the papers. They were covered with words. His face puckered up, his lips moved, awkwardly and in silence. Now and then he came across a short familiar word, but for the most part it was a puzzle and a mystery.

All at once he spied his own name, bold and black in the midst of that confusing sea of print. Somebody had written it there. B. Jencic, it said. Ho! but it was a fine thing to see his name there like that. He put a big finger under it, so that he could see better. And he gazed and gazed, his mouth drooping open. Well . . . so he was a citizen. Now the police could not hit him on the head with a club, like he had seen them hit other people . . . he was

a citizen, because there was his name, swimming before his eyes . . . Jencic . . . Jencic . . . Jencic. . . .

## IV

His eyes opened. He was stretched out on the bed, and he knew, from the taste in his mouth, that he had been asleep. The window was not so bright as it had been. It was time to go to work.

As soon as he had eaten he put on his shoes, tucked the precious papers in his pocket, and set out for the bakery.

Slowly he walked along the familiar street. On either hand the way was flanked with gray buildings, shops and factories and dilapidated tenements all gray and dusty and somber; but in this magic interlude between day and night the prospect was not dingy. The sun was dying, and yet it could transfigure the world. A soft effulgence came stealing forward, a lovely flush of color under which the harsh outlines of the city melted away. There was a moment of tinted glory: tender blue and rose, bronze and violet and nameless hues. Jencic paused to look.

The colors faded. He went on to the bakery.

There was a surprise waiting for him in the store-room. Some one had left a lot of strange things here, sheet iron and chains and blocks of wood, all of which was out of place, for the simple reason that such things as these do not go into the making

of bread. Also, some one had cut a great hole in the floor, and another one in the wall between the storeroom and the bakeroom! Krusack's helper was peeping down through this hole.

"Bring up a crate of eggs," said the helper. "Krusack wants it right away."

Jencic carried the eggs up the stairs to the bakeroom. He told Krusack about the hole in the wall and the strange things down there in the storeroom. The head baker shrugged his shoulders.

"Bah," said he, "don't pay any attention. It is some nonsense of Vogel's, I don't know just what. Now fetch me some sugar and when that is done you can start carrying the rest of the supplies up there. Vogel seems to want it so."

Jencic went back to work. He was relieved. So it was the doing of Vogel, was it! Some nonsense or other, and not worth paying attention to, as Krusack himself had said. Very well, he would think no more about it. Better to use his thoughts for what had happened that morning—the visit to the councilman—the papers—his name, written out in ink. It was fine to ponder such things while he worked.

Up and down the stairs he trudged, carrying flour and salt and the rest of it into the bakeroom. Once he paused near Krusack's bench, puffing, wiping the sweat from his big face. There was a burst of laughter from the pastry room. It must be Teena. She always laughed like that, shrill and



bold. There had been a time when she had laughed at Jencic . . . but would she do that now . . . if she knew he had papers to show that he was an American? Maybe some day he would tell her about those papers and how fine it all was. Maybe. . . .

"What are you doing!" cried Krusack. "Are you catching flies, with your mouth open like that!"

Jencic closed his mouth. He turned to go down the stairs again, but just then the door from the pastry room swung open, and out came Teena, stepping lightly and carelessly, as if she were on promenade. She sauntered up to the water bucket, her body swinging free, like a young birch in the wind. Afterward she sauntered back into the pastry room. A moment later they heard her laughter.

Krusack was frowning. "There is drinking water in there," he growled, "but she must come out here for a drink. Just to have a look at a pair o' pants."

Jencic did not answer.

"You better get busy," said Krusack. "All that stuff's got to come up here, soon's it can. That's Vogel's orders."

V

Jencic returned to his task. With all his other work it took two nights, but at last it was done. The storeroom was empty of its accustomed piles of flour and sugar and the like.

Meantime a kind of machine had been born there. While Jencic was home, eating and sleeping, it must have been that people came and worked at the sheet iron and chains and blocks which had been littering the floor. Jencic never saw these people, and yet every night that he came to work there were changes to be noticed, until finally he could not but see that there was an apparatus which went from a point near the alley door up toward the bakeroom and into it, through that hole in the wall.

All this was a puzzle to Jencic, and yet he gave it very little thought. What is the use of thinking about such things, anyway! There are all sorts of baffling things in the world, and if you try to figure them out you waste your time and get a headache in the bargain. The thing to do is to do your work and let puzzles take care of themselves.

So Jencic did his work, and when he had finished carrying his supplies upstairs he took a broom and fell to sweeping the floor of the storeroom. He began at the furthestmost corner, sweeping slowly and methodically. For two nights he had been carrying things upstairs, and now the task was done, and he was content. Life was good, life was solid and familiar. Its very regularity was a comfort and a blessing. The same old bakery that he had worked in ever since he could remember . . . the smell of new bread . . . Jencic working away, working as he had always worked.

There was a step. He looked up.

It was Vogel. The little redhead looked about with the air of an inspector. . . . Presently he took some bills from his pocket, counted them, and turned to Jencic.

"Here is your money," said he.

Jencic looked at the bills, then he looked at Vogel.

"Take it," said the little German, fidgeting at his eyeglasses with his free hand. "Put it in your pocket."

Jencic did as he was told.

"That is your week's wages," continued Vogel. "I am paying you for three days you didn't work, because I am generous. Now you can go home. I am through with you."

But Jencic only gazed at him, his gray eyes calm and steady. It was clear enough. The little runt of a German was crazy. Maybe he was also drunk. Better not to pay any attention to him, but go on with his work. Whereupon he took his broom and began to sweep.

"Stop that!" cried Vogel, and when the big man had stopped, "didn't you hear what I said?"

"Yes."

"Then do as I told you. Put down that broom. I don't want you to sweep any more."

"You don't want me to sweep any more?"

"No, I don't. Didn't I just say so?"

"What shall I do, then?"

The little proprietor put up his hands as if he

were going to tear out his own hair. His face was full of blood. His eyeglasses trembled on his nose.

"Dumkopf!" he sputtered. "Can't you get anything through that thick skull of yours! I tell you I am paying you off. I am firing you. I have just paid you, so I owe you nothing, not even a cent. There is no more for you. You ask what I want you to do, and I told you. I want you to take your hat and coat and go home."

Jencic looked at him for some time. Finally he said,

"You want me to go home?"

"Yes," said Vogel with great emphasis, "that is just what I want. Go home, and stay there, too."

## CHAPTER IV

### I

JENCIC went home, but he did not stay there. He came back to the bakery the next evening, and made his way to the storeroom, as usual. Vogel was there, standing by the machine and watching a man in greasy overalls as he tightened something with a wrench. This did not bother Jencic; he merely gave them a look, and took off his coat and hung it on a nail, just as he had done at this hour so many times before.

"Now what?" exclaimed Vogel, catching sight of him.

"I have come to work," said Jencic. He hung up his hat.

"You have come to the wrong place. There is no work for you here."

With this the little proprietor transferred his glance to the mechanic who was working at the machine, leaving Jencic to think it over. Come to the wrong place, had he! What was Vogel talking about! This was the same place as before, the same bakery, the same storeroom, except for that machine. And as for work . . . well, Vogel's head must be bothering him to say there was no work. In the bakery there was always work, always bread

to be made. Even now he could hear them moving about upstairs: Krusack rolling his wooden trough into position, somebody sloshing water, the oven man prodding his fires,—all the bustle and life that go with the making of bread. Yes, there was work here, and so there was no sense in Vogel saying there wasn't any.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Jencic rolled up his sleeves and spit on his hands.

"Did you hear me?" broke in Vogel. "Must I go over it again? What is it you want?"

"I want my job."

"Your job is gone. There is no work for you here any more. Now go away, please. I am busy."

Once more Vogel turned back to the machine and the noisy mechanic. As for Jencic, he was beginning to suspect that the little redhead had lost his wits altogether, lolling around in his office.

"My job is not gone," he said all at once. "It is right here, the same as before. It is for me to carry flour and such things."

Vogel paid no attention. The mechanic was showing him something about the machine, and he was nodding in a very interested way.

"If I don't bring such things to the bakers," continued Jencic, "they would be behind with the bread-making."

The mechanic gathered up his tools. He was ready to leave. Vogel said good-by to him, then he turned to Jencic. The big man was standing with



his feet far apart, stubbornly waiting for something to happen. Vogel adjusted his eyeglasses and gave him a cool, hard glance.

"You are mistaken," he said. "The bakers will not fall behind, in spite of not having your valuable help. I have arrangements so that this machine will do what you used to do."

This was too much for Jencic. He could make no reply. Vogel was crazy, that was all.

"It is like this," said the little proprietor, suddenly relaxing. "I am sorry to have to let you go, since you are with me so long, but business is business. My place must be modern, just as the sign out in front says. Vogel's Modern Bakery! that is the idea. I . . . good! there is a load coming now. You see, I have figured it all out, labor cost and the rest of it, and what I am going to do is have machinery as fast as I can. I begin with this automatic conveyor, because it is cheaper than you. There is a wagon now. It is a good time for a test. You shall see how nice the machine can carry the sacks into the bakeroom."

Jencic appeared to have been stupefied by this speech. Usually he hurried to the alley door when he heard a wagon coming, but not now. Even when the door rolled back he did not turn: his eyes were fixed on the machine.

It was a load of sugar. Vogel rubbed his hands, smiling.

"New machine ready?" inquired the driver pleasantly.

"Yes," said Vogel, "it is ready, and I have been waiting for you to see how it works. Just pull the cord by the door there, and you will see how it goes."

The driver pulled the cord. There was a muffled ringing, as from a bell in the bakeroom. Krusack's helper stuck his head through the hole in the wall. He grinned down at them.

"Pull the lever," Vogel shouted up at him, "and when the sacks come up you take them off and pile them to one side, where the others are. Go ahead now."

The helper pulled the lever. There was a creak, a jerking sound, and then Jencic saw that the long flat surface of the machine was moving, going slowly up and up and afterward down and back around—to his amazement he suddenly perceived a sack of sugar half way up the incline, moving up and up with the moving surface of the conveyor. He jerked round to look at the wagonload of sugar: the driver was placing his sacks on the machine, first one, then another, and the machine was taking them up into the bakeroom, up and up and up. . . .

All at once the machine halted.

Jencic trembled. A great light spread in his face. He was breathing again, then Vogel ran up and jerked something and the conveyor continued

on its way, carrying the sacks of sugar with it, up and up and up . . . Jencic was in despair, and despair lent him force and brilliance.

"I can do it better than that!" he cried. "I will show you," and he caught up a sack and started for the stairs which led to the bakeroom.

"Stop that!" shouted Vogel angrily. "Put that sack back. Go on, do as I say. . . . Now you stop this horse play, or I shall get out of patience with you."

Jencic's sick eyes watched the sack of sugar move up the incline, steadily up and up. It did not halt. One sack after another, until the load was gone. . . .

The driver dusted himself, said something about the conveyor, and drove off. Vogel closed the door after him, and without so much as a glance for Jencic he went up the stairs to the bakeroom. His footsteps were no longer to be heard.

Jencic was alone with the machine.

## II

He stood gazing at the thing for a long time, his shoulders slumped forward, his long arms hanging limp, his eyes dull. Calamity had come upon him. Because of this machine. Because of Vogel. That little runt of a redhead had done it. He had cast Jencic to one side, like a worn-out sack. Only Jencic was not worn out. Nay, the man was in his

prime, a great hearty fellow who was not only strong and young, but willing as well.

But now he had no work. Vogel had made a machine to take his place.

Why had the boss played such a trick on him? Well . . . maybe it was a joke, one of those rough jests which people sometimes played on Jencic. But no, Vogel was never a man to make jokes. He meant what he said. . . . Must be that the boss was angry with him about something he had done. But what could it be! Jencic had been a steady worker, never asking for more pay, and never complaining of his tasks. And yet Jencic must have offended the little man, else he would never have brought this machine here to take his place. Ho! maybe it was the time he swept the floor so hard he got Vogel dusty! Vogel was something of a dude, so if you dirtied his clothes he would not like it. Well, perhaps . . . it might be. . . . Or maybe that other time, the time Vogel said to him, "Pile these sacks with the ears out, they will be easier to handle that way, do you hear me?" To all of which Jencic had paid no attention. He had gone ahead and piled his sacks according to his own method, doing it as he was accustomed to do it. So! maybe that was what made Vogel mad, just because Jencic didn't do as he said. The big man had held him in contempt because Vogel gave up bread-making for an office . . . but after all maybe you shouldn't do that with a man who is paying you to work for him,

especially if he is likely to get mad about it and fetch a machine to do your work instead. It was too bad Jencic had done that. But then he didn't mean any harm by it. Maybe if he went to Vogel and told him about it the little redhead would not be mad any more, and then he would send the machine away and let Jencic have his old job back.

Pondering in this fashion Jencic took his hat and coat and went up the stairs into the bakeroom. Krusack was at the further end of the room, blinking into the ovens to see if they were hot enough. The head baker did not see Jencic, but Pete the second baker saw him.

"So you are out of a job," he said in a low sly voice.

Jencic gave him no answer. He had never liked this man, and now he liked him still less. It is not the thing to do to make fun of a person who is in trouble.

"I am glad of it," continued Pete, speaking softly, so that Krusack would not hear him. "In fact, I am tickled to death, and when I get time I am going to laugh myself sick about it. Do you know why? Because you are a Hunky, and I do not like Hunkies. This for you," and he snapped his fingers in Jencic's face.

The big man drew back out of the way. He was not angry, he was not even annoyed. There were people in the world like this second baker, people who were always ready with threats and rough talk

and even insults, but what Pete said made no great difference to him, especially at this time. It was Vogel who counted just now, and no one but Vogel. So he turned away, leaving Pete to sneer as much as he pleased.

"Hey!" cried the head baker, catching sight of him, but Jencic did not pause. He was in disgrace. His heart was heavy. There could be no facing Krusack until he had his job back.

Jencic turned into the pastry room, because that was the shortest way down to the office. That was where the three girls worked, Teena and two others. They were chatting and laughing, and incidentally making doughnuts. Teena's eyes fell upon Jencic the instant he came in the door. She whispered something to her companions. "I dare you," giggled one of them, whereupon Teena straightened up, her face sober as could be.

"Jencic!" she called out.

The big man stopped in his tracks. He turned around and looked at her.

"Come here," said Teena, beckoning with her finger.

He came forward, somber as a giant walking in his sleep.

Teena reached out and took his great calloused hand between her palms. She raised her soft eyes to his, and pressed his hand, murmuring, with a pensive air,

"I like you, Jencic. Do you like me? Tell me



you do, you big handsome boy—go on, tell me you do.”

Jencic gazed at her without saying a word. He did not comprehend what she was saying. That head of his was filled to the brim with but a single engrossing theme—his job, himself, the machine, Vogel. There was no room for anything else just then, not even for Teena. He must get to Vogel. And so he drew away his hand, and turned to go.

“Jencic,” cried the girl, “Jencic, come back to me! See, I am fainting for you!”

He went on toward the front stairs, hearing neither her talk of fainting nor the smother of laughter which followed. Down the stairs he clumped, to the office.

A moment’s hesitation and he opened the door and went in. Vogel swung round in his chair. When he saw who it was his face reddened with annoyance, but before he could open his mouth Jencic himself began to speak, his hurried voice gruff and very humble,

“I—about my job—Mr. Vogel—the time I done something that made you mad with me—but—will you give me my job back, then—I will not do it again—whatever you want I will do—I—”

The proprietor rose to his feet with a gesture of finality.

“Jencic,” he said sharply, “you are barking up the wrong tree. Listen. I am not mad with you for anything, so be quiet about that. I let you go

because I got a machine that can do your work cheaper than six dollars a week. Can't you understand that?"

"But—"

"Come with me," said Vogel. He took Jencic by the arm and led him into the hall and to the outer door. Then he pushed him outside, saying, "Go home, I am sick of talking to you."

Jencic was seized with terror. He had no strength, no will. A desperate weakness had taken possession of him. "Let me have my job back," he chattered. "I can do it to suit. I will show you I am better than the machine you got. Besides, I will work cheaper, Mr. Vogel. Listen, Mr. Vogel, I will work for five dollars a week, and that way you will save a dollar. Just give me my job back, that is all I want, even for four dollars a week, Mr. Vogel—uh—uh—uh. . . ."

Mr. Vogel had closed the door in his face.

### III

Jencic sat down on the steps. He remained there a long time, silent, motionless, staring ahead with unwinking eyes.

At last he rose to his feet and went off up the street, slowly dragging his feet, one after the other. Once he turned to look back: the bakery was aglow with light, each window a blot of soft illumination. Smoke went up from the chimney. They were busy in there.

He went on. The streets were dark, save for a pale corner lamp here and there. It was that oppressive hour between midnight and dawn. There was only one person to be seen: a huckster, picking over his bananas in a cellar close up against the sidewalk, throwing away the rotten ones and piling the good ones in neat rows, getting ready for the coming day. Jencic shambled past. His footsteps echoed upon the pavement. It was like walking in a city of the dead, with himself a phantom, giving out a muffled hollow tread, and casting a pallid shadow, unreal and insubstantial.

His lodging house appeared before him. Still walking with slow heavy strides he went in the door and climbed the stairs to his room. A long search for a match. . . . He lit the gas. Dully he looked about, gazing at the sagging bed, the shabby chair, the little commode where he kept his whisky.

It was waiting for him, a quart bottle, nearly full. He drew the cork and drank. . . . Still clutching the bottle he sat down on the bed, breathing noisily.

Somewhere out in the night a clock was striking . . . two, three . . . three o'clock . . . about time for the bread to come out of the ovens. Kru-sack was seizing the long wooden peel and beating on the floor as a signal . . . it was just at three o'clock . . . that was the way the head baker timed the work of the bakery . . . sometimes Jencic wheeled up the racks for the bread, but now . . .

well . . . what was that on the floor? A piece of white, with black print on it, and in the middle of it a bold name, written in ink—Jencic, the name said. . . .

“Scut!” said Jencic, and kicked at the paper. “Uh. . . .” He stopped speaking. His voice was so hoarse. It sounded strange.

Again he drank from the bottle, upending the thing and letting the liquor gallop noisily down his throat. His eyes had begun to take on a glaze, his jaw dropped down. He kept drinking . . . that big hand of his was growing unsteady . . . the bottle slipped from his grip. For a moment he wavered forward, as if to pick it up, then with an inarticulate sound he fell over on the bed and lay quietly.

Presently a deep choking snore made itself heard in the room.

## CHAPTER V

### I

UNFORTUNATELY for Jencic he could not sleep forever. In the morning he woke up, and there he was, face to face with his trouble again. He lay sprawled on the bed, blinking at the ceiling. There were sounds about the house: the slamming of doors, feet shuffling back and forth . . . people going off for the day's work . . . little by little these noises died away. Every one had gone off to work, except Jencic.

After a while he threw back the blankets and sat up on the edge of the bed. But he did not rise to his feet, he only sat there, a hulk of impotent brooding flesh. An hour passed, and still he sat there. Occasionally he let out a dreary yawn, and sometimes he scratched his head, but beyond this he did nothing. All his life he had been at close grips with labor—lifting, carrying, doing whatever there was to do—then Vogel made a machine and took away his job. Jencic's stout round arms flowed down into hands as broad as the face of a child; those hands of his had taken on a polish with the years, somewhat as a spade is brightened from long contact with the earth; his hands were implements;

they bore scars which were the fruit of many an encounter with bale and box.

But now those hands were full of a great ache, because they were empty.

What was to be done? Jencic did not know. He could not have imagined a future which did not concern the bakery, and so it was that when the day passed and the light of his window began softly to dim he slowly and methodically put on his shoes. This was the hour in which he customarily prepared to go to work. Only to-day he did not eat. His throat had closed up; it would have been impossible for him to have taken a mouthful. He simply took his hat and went down into the street. There was something mechanical in the way he set out in the direction of the bakery. The man had turned into an automaton.

All at once a violent tremor ran over this automaton. He stopped walking. His frame became rigid, as if perhaps his mechanical works had run down. The man was returning to life. An idea had penetrated that thick skull of his. What time was it? Was it late, or what? Twilight, that was what time it was—maybe twenty minutes before the bakery opened—he could manage—no street lamps yet—just twilight—yes, he could manage.

He hurried on to the bakery, but instead of pausing at the front door he shambled around the back way. The alley had filled with concealing shadow. Good. Now he would show 'em that a machine has



no right to take a man's work away from him. The back door is locked, but no matter. Jencic knows of a big hole that they cut in the floor of the storeroom, the night he first noticed all that sheet iron and stuff that later on turned into the machine. That hole is big enough to admit a man, even a man the size of Jencic.

Cautiously he glances about. There is no one in sight, whereupon he drops to all fours and crawls under the building. It is dark and smelly under there, and he keeps bumping his head as he inches along. Gradually, however, his eyes grow accustomed to the gloom, then he gets along better.

Presently he comes to the hole. It is covered with boards, but when he puts his hand against them he finds that they are loose.

Very slowly and very gently he lifts the boards aside. He clears the hole, and then he hoists himself up through it, until he is standing upright, his legs below the floor, his trunk above it. His eyes shift about . . . the place is empty, save for the machine, gray and sinister in the gloom.

Jencic's heart is pounding furiously, his mouth is dry, his legs weak; nevertheless, he takes on resolution at the sight of that machine. There it is, right before his eyes. He does not understand such things, where they come from or how they work, but he understands that this contrivance has robbed him of his job. That is enough. Now he is in the storeroom, standing by the machine, looking at it. Jen-

cic has never done anything like this before. All his life he has been faithful to his job, but now he has been outdone, and accordingly. . . . Well, he does not like to do it, but it's absolutely necessary. That job of his is a rudder for Jencic, rudder and oars and compass and boat and all; without his job life is a maelstrom. So he must get his job back again.

The man reached out, and with his huge hands he took hold of the chain which rode along the edge of the conveyor. In a few moments he had got it loose; it came off in his hands, limp and broken. Ho!

He tossed the chain down through the hole in the floor. Then he made his way back to the alley. It was darker than before. There was no one in sight. A moment later he crawled out from beneath the building, rose to his feet, and walked rapidly away.

## II

Walking back toward his lodging house he met Teena and her two friends. They were going to work, swinging along arm in arm, and when they saw the grin on Jencic's face they broke into laughter,

"The Hunky's drunk again!"

Jencic stopped short, "So-o-o! Well, I am not drunk at all. I . . . uh."

The girls laughed harder than ever, and mocked him,

"I . . . uh . . . ha ha ha ha ha ha . . . I . . . uh!"

Jencic went on. The grin returned to his face. It had been a good stroke of business back there in the storeroom. The machine was helpless. He had fixed it so it could not run. At this very instant the bakery was opening. In a few moments a wagonload of flour would come up to the alley door. The driver would roll back the door and ring the bell, and then somebody would try to set the conveyor going. Ho! but that would be worth seeing! Little Vogel would storm and fret and maybe let his eyeglasses fall, he would be so furious, and then when he had got it into his head that the machine was no account, lo, and behold! Jencic would walk in. What would happen then? Vogel would say to him,

"The machine is no good, Jencic. There is much flour to be carried up to the bakeroom, so I will give you back your old job. Take off your coat and get to work!"

Such was Jencic's expectation, and when he walked about the streets for half an hour he turned back toward the bakery. Well, it was going to come out all right, for there was a team coming out of the alley, with an empty wagon. Also, there was a second wagon unloading at the back end of the bakery. Now was the time! He would appear.

There would be sacks of flour all over the floor, and Vogel stamping and tearing his hair, all because he had to learn that a machine cannot be compared to a man.

He strode down the alley, up the platform steps, and into the storeroom. Then he stopped, as abruptly as if he had been slapped in the face. The machine was running. The driver was placing his sacks on the incline, one by one. And one by one the sacks were moving up and up to the bake-room. . . .

### III

When he came to himself he was in the street, walking slowly and somewhat unsteadily. He had been drinking.

It was evening, but still early. The sun had gone away and the heavens were yielding themselves to thick black clouds, yet here and there among these somber masses there were still a few gashes of livid sky; they shed a faint illumination upon the earth, and as they faded out the street lamps began to come on, bursting forth in individual glows, like so many fireflies beneath a blanket. A cold wind was abroad. Jencic could feel it whip at his face.

A great sullenness had been born in him, a resentful spite bred out of the idleness of the man and fostered by too much brooding and drinking. The street was filled with people, and although

Jencic sober was a mild fellow who would have got in the gutter rather than brush against any one, he was rough this evening. His soul was in revolt. He did not care if he bumped against this one or that one. Let them grumble and scowl, he did not care. Why should he! What was a man to care about when his job had been taken away from him! No, he did not give a damn. The only thing he cared about was his errand.

That errand of Jencic's concerned the bakery. To-night was Saturday. There would be no one on the premises. As for the machine, he had paid it one visit, and now he was going to pay it another. This time he would not be so gentle. A man can stand a lot, but he cannot stand too much.

The bakery was just ahead. There stood a policeman, not in front of Vogel's place, to be sure, but near the fruit store next door. This policeman was eating peanuts and swinging his club. He was not more than twenty feet from the entrance to the alley.

Jencic exhibited a bit of cunning. What he did was to stop and pretend to examine the wares in a certain shop window. It was full of fine things for women to wear: shoes, skirts, and a number of more intimate articles.

There was a step at his elbow. But it was not the policeman, it was the shopkeeper, a little Jew who might have been Putinsky's brother, by the look of him.

"Ah," murmured the Jew, wrinkling up his face until his whiskers stuck out in every direction, "do you wish things for your wife maybe? Or is it your young lady, maybe? Come in, I will show you very fine goods for such low price."

Jencic looked beyond him. The policeman was gone, whereupon Jencic walked off, leaving the shopkeeper in the middle of a voluble sentence.

Straight into the alley went Jencic. There were two men standing in the shadows, but they were only drinking from a bottle, as he and Krusack had done so many times themselves. These men went back toward the street as Jencic came up. He merely glanced at them and proceeded to the back end of the bakery.

This time he did not look about, but simply got to his hands and knees and crawled under the building. When he had gone a couple of feet he heard something running. He halted to look. But he was not alarmed, it was simply that he wanted to know what it was. The thing reached the alley and stood still for a moment, printing its silhouette against the light. It was a cat.

"Huh!" said Jencic, and went on. He thought to himself, "If the hole is nailed up, I will smash it open," but when he got there and poked about with his fingers it was apparent that the boards were loose, just as before. Ho! but that was well for the boards, otherwise they would have got a good



smashing. So they had not nailed the hole up! What fools they were, to leave it open again.

He flung back the boards, taking no pains to be silent. No, he was not going to be gentle this time, neither in opening the hole nor in climbing up through. Jencic felt himself fill with meanness as he stood up in the storeroom and looked at the machine. To think that he should have to come sneaking in here like a cat, here where he had worked so long, and passed so many fine comfortable nights, arranging his sacks of flour and casks of lard, and the rest of it. And now—

Jencic put his hand on the machine. The touch of that cold unyielding surface seemed to fill him with rage. He gritted his teeth and seized hold of it with both his great fists, thinking to rip it to pieces and stamp it into the earth, then suddenly there was an interfering sound. It came from the alley. That alley teemed with all sorts of creatures at night, especially Saturday night. Men came here to drink, dogs came in search of bones, cats in pursuit of one another. Women brought drunken sots here to rob them, boys came here to divide their pilferings. Almost any of the odds and ends of the city might drift into that alley and make some sound or other—yet this sound was not so innocent, for all at once there was a sharp commanding voice,

“We got ’em! Watch the door there!”

Jencic could hear somebody crawling under the

building, coming the way he had come. There was also some one at the alley door, fumbling at the padlock.

It seemed that he was trapped, yet there is in all of us a bag of wit which opens up in times of dire need, and so of Jencic. If any one had ever said to him, "Suppose you were in the storeroom and the police were at the alley door, how would you escape?" it is likely that he would have gawked and swallowed his Adam's apple any number of times, without being able to offer any sensible plan whatsoever. But when he found himself actually in this situation, he did not stand there gawking. On the contrary, he threw quick glances this way and that, and ran up the stairs which led to the bake-room. He took hold of the door.

It was latched, from the other side.

A chance marauder might have abandoned hope at this point, but not Jencic. He himself had made that latch, contriving it many years before, out of a staple and a piece of shoe leather and a wooden peg. Vogel was talking to him at the time—it was before the little redhead had given up bread-making to take refuge in an office and figure out how to make machines that would take away a man's job. Yes, Jencic knew that fastening, how old it was, and just how to jerk it. In the flash of an eye he had it loose and was in the bakeroom.

Whoever was after him had apparently got into the storeroom by now, because he could hear shouts

and the thud of feet. But as for that, Jencic was on familiar ground, and they were not. Maybe they counted on this being a sensible building, instead of an intricate series of cubby-holes, a species of maze developing out of the dwelling house of long ago. Jencic knew the place as it was, and so it was without hesitation that he bounded up the steps which led to the attic. Once he used to sleep there. He remembered a window and what it looked out upon.

Gaining the attic he flung up the dusty window and clambered out onto the roof. He slid down the incline, reached a lower roof going off at another angle, clattered down this also, and let himself slip over the edge to the ground, fetching up in a narrow cul-de-sac which separated the bakery from the Jew shop next door.

"Oh!" exclaimed a startled voice.

Jencic looked around. There was a girl not ten feet from him, standing in the shadow beside a larger figure. It was Teena. But Jencic no more than looked at her, he was so intent on getting out of there.

He walked rapidly into the lighted street.

#### IV

In front of the bakery stood the policeman that Jencic had seen a little while before. Only he was not eating peanuts now, he was looking at the front

of Vogel's place, and breathing very heavily. Maybe he had been running.

Jencic had to go past him.

"Hey there!" called the policeman.

A cold sweat broke out upon Jencic. He stopped dead still, thinking to himself, "I am done for."

The officer came up to him,

"What's your name?"

"Jencic."

"You work at the bakery here, don't you?"

"Yes, I—"

"Thought I recognized yuh. Now listen to me. When you see Vogel, you tell him them kids got into his place again to-night, see? We chased 'em, but they must ha' climbed out o' some window and got away. You tell 'im we done the best we could, will ye?"

"Yes."

"It's his own damn' fault, though," continued the policeman. "They got in through that hole in the floor. I told 'im to nail it up, but I guess he forgot it. They got in the same way this time, the way it looks. You can't leave things open like that an' not miss stuff. He's lucky if he don't lose some cakes out of it. Well . . . when will you see 'im, anyway?"

"I don't know."

"Huh? Ye don't know! Why not? Don't you work there?"

"I used to," stammered Jencic, "but I don't any more."

"Oh, well! why didn't ye say so? Don't bother, then. I'll drop around an' tell 'im m'self."

The officer walked off.

Jencic set off up the street. He went to Putinsky's and got a quart of whisky, and then he went home.

As soon as he was in his room he sat down on the bed and began to drink. . . .

## CHAPTER VI

### I

FOR a week Jencic had been more or less drunk. He applied liquor as a kind of narcotic. Now and then he came pulsing out of the sea of oblivion, whereupon he seized his bottle and swamped whatever glimmer of reality the offing had presented. The passage of time no longer concerned him. What was to-day? Was it Wednesday, or Thursday, or was it Friday? Jencic did not know. But then it did not matter. The only thing that mattered was his job. Down the street there was a bakery. He used to work there, but now . . .

The labor of his hands had always been a cathartic for Jencic. So long as he worked he pumped vigor through that big frame of his and kept himself clear and clean. Now that he had no work he was little more than a mass of inert flesh, a carcass slouching in his room, staring at the floor, and drinking.

A great deal of drinking, but very little eating. So long as he had possessed a job he ate heartily, consuming all such solid comforts as meat and cheese and fish. In those days he had six dollars coming in every week. This sufficed for his needs: room rent, food, and at least a dollar to be saved.



Part of Jencic's bulk was due to the money belt which he wore about his waist. . . .

It was different now. He no longer had a job, no regular wage, no satisfying six dollars. Hence he must cut down on food. Meat, cheese, raisins, hard-boiled eggs from the delicatessen,—all these must go. Bread was good enough for a man who was not working, bread and a few onions, and the like of that. It was not so fine as his customary fare, but it was enough. If a man were to spend all his savings on food when he was out of a job it would not be long before he would be without a cent.

He took another drink. It was afternoon and he was in his room, sitting on the edge of the bed and slumping forward until his big face seemed on the point of sinking to the floor. It was growing darker . . . colder and darker, until at last he raised his head and gazed about, in the dull stupid way he had. Growing dark all at once . . . and raining in the bargain . . . patter, patter, patter . . . so it was raining . . . and getting darker and darker. . . .

Presently he lurched to his feet, found a match, and managed to light the gas. It was brighter now. He sagged back down upon the bed, gaping dully at the floor. . . .

The next he knew a harsh loud voice struck upon his ears, like a club. He looked up. In the door stood his landlady, a large bony creature, rugged

as a granite pillar, with great generous breasts, and a mustache like a youth. A dark stern woman, and very independent with her lodgers, all because her husband earned good money at the gas works. There she stood, filling the doorway with her grease.

"What you got the gas on for?" she demanded.

There was no answer. She strode in and turned out the light.

"Blockhead," she pursued, "what do you mean by wasting gas when it is daytime? It is a good thing for me I come up just now, or you would burn me out of house and home. What are you doing, sitting there? Are you hatching young ones!"

Jencic gazed at her with dull uninterested eyes.

"It is rent day for you," she went on, "so you can pay."

"Pay?" Jencic did not appear to understand the word.

"Yes, pay, that is what I said. Are you drunk again? Phew, I should think so by the stink. People like you should be in a stable. But since you are here, hand over two dollars. You must pay in advance, the same as always."

"I got no job," muttered Jencic.

The woman scowled at him, "Well, what of that? I can't help it."

"I can't help it either," said Jencic sullenly.

"You are a simpleton!" cried the landlady. "I suspect it for a long time, and now I am sure of

it. But don't try such talk with me, you sheeps-head. My husband will throw you down stairs head first if he heard you insult me like this. And I might do it myself before he got a chance. I have handled bums like you before, and I could do it again, so shut up your mouth and pay for next week, right now!"

Jencic went back to staring at the floor. He would pay no more attention to her, that was the best way.

"Will you pay?" she cried. There was a threat in her voice.

"No," said Jencic stubbornly, "I will not pay. Why should I waste money on you, when I got no work? No, I will not pay. I will not pay two dollars, and I will not pay two cents, either."

"Then you get out of my house!" screamed the landlady, filling with blood. "Get out! Right now! Take your rags and go. If I come back here I will call the police. I give you five minutes," and out she strode. That was the way she ran her house, no playing the hypocrite, no pussyfooting, but plain talk. Instead of "will you be able to pay me shortly?" she said "pay or get out."

It was an ultimatum. Jencic was digesting it. So she had ordered him out! Very well, he would go, if that was the way she felt about it. Certainly he was not fool enough to pay rent when he had no wages coming in.

"Are you going?" It was the landlady shouting

at him from the floor below. "In a minute and a half I will come back and throw you out, you wop!"

"I am going," replied Jencic, and rose to his feet.

He got his things together. It was not a difficult task. His satchel held everything but an extra shirt, an extra suit of underwear, and a second pair of pants; and these articles he could wear. The weather was bad, so a few extra clothes would do no harm.

Everything was ready. He took the satchel and started down the stairs. The landlady was somewhere on the second floor. She cried out as he passed,

"I'm going to see if you are stealing anything, you robber!"

Jencic could hear her going up to his room as he went on down the stairs. There was no small amount of liquor in him, and as a consequence he felt mean. He was trying to think of a suitable retort to that woman . . . at the hall door he paused, turned slowly round and shouted back at her,

"What's that you say! Calling me a robber, do you!"

Then he went out into the wet weather.

## II

It was one of those cold dismal rains which come early in the year, before spring has made up its

mind to act like spring. Night was about to fall. Save for Jencic and one or two others, the street was deserted. All in all, the prospect was somewhat gloomy.

Jencic began to wander about the streets, carrying his little satchel. He took pains not to go beyond the confines of his neighborhood. Trouble had descended upon him, true enough, yet it would be so much worse if he left the district with which he had become familiar. He was acquainted with these few streets, and he must be careful not to leave them, lest he run afoul of woes greater than storm and night. As for the weather . . .

The truth was that Jencic had never thought very much about the weather. It was one of those large matters which, like the sky and earth, existed and that was all. He had taken it as it came, without comment, and even without focusing his attention upon it. Some days were hot, some were cold, but what of it! What was he to say, if it chose to snow, or get hot, or do something else!

But now, all of a sudden, the weather pressed in upon his consciousness. It struck him directly and with full force, via an interminable series of raindrops, cold penetrating raindrops which wet him to the skin in no time at all. Was it going to rain forever! That was the way it looked to Jencic when he peered up at the sky . . . how dark it was, turbulent and unfriendly, with a tall black something

going up against it . . . a steeple, terminating in a cross . . . it was the church.

Jencic looked at this church for a long time. It was a massive building, without a light, without sign of a human life. There was no one to be seen. . . .

Finally he went up the steps and sat down in the doorway of the church, his satchel at his feet. It was better than walking about in the wet. To be sure, the rain still came down, yet by dint of pressing against the door he was at least partly sheltered. H'm, it was not so bad . . . not so bad. It was a shelter, and it helped him to avoid the necessity of paying rent—a bad thing when you have no job.

Ah, that job of his. How suddenly it had happened—like a building he had seen tumble down one time. A few days ago and everything was fine as could be: he had work, and made money, and ate all he wanted. In the evening he went from his room to the bakery, and in the morning he went from the bakery to his room. Working and eating and sleeping, a fine life—and now look at the mess he was in—rain, and cold wind, confusion and a dark dawn ahead, misery without end. He was as bad off as the cat he had seen prowling about under the bakery . . . only it would do Jencic no good to prowl about the bakery any more. The machine could not be beaten. When you wounded it the monster recovered and went on as before. Fate was on its side. Wasn't it a fact that a warning sound had interfered at the very instant that



he was going to break it into pieces! There was no use fighting the machine, that was plain.

"What are you doing here?" said a voice.

It was a policeman, looking very impressive in his helmet and oilskin cloak. He had come up while Jencic was wrapped in dull reflection, and now he wanted to know what Jencic was doing here. What was he doing! Well, what would any man be doing, sitting in a doorway with his collar turned up against the rain! Jencic only looked at him.

"Move on," said the officer. "Ye can't stay here."

Jencic experienced a moment of trembling uncertainty. He had liquor in him, and he wanted to tell this policeman to go to hell and let him alone. But stronger than Putinsky's whisky was the custom of a lifetime. Jencic was in the habit of obeying the law; this officer was the law, and so the big man got to his feet and picked up his satchel.

"Ye ought to know better," said the policeman sternly. "A church ain't no place t' sleep."

Without a word Jencic started down the street again. The rain came harder than before, cold and hard and without pause. So, this was the way it was . . . a man got tired and wet and tried to take a bit of rest in the doorway of a church, then along comes a police officer and orders him off, because the church is not for that! Indignation

swept upon Jencic, and before he knew what he was doing he had turned round and shouted,

"Well, then, what's a church good for, anyhow!"

The policeman wheeled around and started back toward him. Jencic stood still, holding his satchel in his hand. The officer came up to him, exclaiming,

"What d'ye mean by *that*?"

"What?"

"Saying what a church is for. Are you a Bol-sheviki?"

"Huh?"

"What's your name? Are you a citizen of this country, or are you a wop?"

"Ho!" said Jencic with resolution, "that's just what I am. I am American citizen. I have papers to show for it," and he pulled them out of his shirt.

"All right, then, but just the same don't go runnin' down the Church. Don't ye know American citizens don't insult the Church? They stick up fer it, see? Now, cut out of here. Go on, wherever ye're goin'."

"Where to?"

"Where to! How do I know. Where d'ye want to go?"

"I want to go to work."

"Then go, and stop loafin' around my beat, before I get sore an' run ye in."

"They took my job," continued Jencic. "I got no place to work now. Vogel done it."

The officer eyed him sharply, and by way of hint he produced a formidable club, "Say, what's the game, what's the game? 'Tryin' to make a fool out o' me, are ye?"

"No," said Jencic. His resolution was leaving him.

"Why don't ye get in out o' the rain?" asked the policeman. "Go to some lodging house. There's one right down the street, about four doors. Ye can't gad the street like this."

Jencic opened his mouth to reply, but with a wave of his club the officer had dismissed him, and so he said no more. It is hard to say things to a policeman when you are wet and cold and haven't eaten meat for four or five days. Hard, very hard, and so he went on down the street, as he had been told.

"It's the house with the big porch," the officer called after him, not unkindly.

The house with the big porch . . . yes, there it was, dark and commodious and vaguely familiar to Jencic. He had no intention of going in there and hiring a room, nevertheless that porch attracted him. It was large and dry, and surely at this hour its dark recesses must be safe from the glances of passers-by. There was no light, nor was any one to be seen in the street, not even the policeman with his agile club and his "go on, now, find a lodging house, you."

Slowly and with infinite caution Jencic ascended

the steps. Ah, the porch was dry as could be, and much warmer than out in the blowy street. A dry snug place, good enough for anybody.

He sat down against the wall of the house. At last he could take a bit of comfort. A trickle of wetness ran down his neck, but when he took off his hat it was better. The rain came pattering down upon the roof, and now that he had found shelter that pattering was not altogether unpleasant. . . . No, not unpleasant . . . rather nice, in fact, a sound rich in comfort, soothing him . . . stirring memories in him . . . rain on the roof . . . well, that was the way it was . . . patter, patter, patter, patter . . . as in the ancient days . . . far away, when there had been no trouble, but only childish laughter and fun . . . it was in an attic and he was dozing on a pallet of straw . . . and the rain was pattering on the roof . . . patter patter, patter patter. . . .

### III

He had fallen asleep, his head upon his breast and his hands in his lap. Now and then his fingers twitched, opening and closing with little spasmodic movements, clutching at something, for he who had been a stranger to dream was dreaming. It appeared to him that his hands ached, and he was trying to ease them by taking hold of a solid object which kept moving about in front of him. Only he

could not seize it. He clutched and clawed mightily, but whatever he got hold of immediately turned to nothingness, and all the time the ache in his hands was torturing him. It was a horrible sensation, so that he moaned with the hurt of it.

And then in his dream it seemed to Jencic that this ache began to spread up through his arms and into his body, until by some frightful subtlety it was not an ache any more, but a painful sound, the palpitation of church bells ringing out clear and loud, and mocking him because he was in trouble. A vast oppression settled upon him. He gave out a moan. It was too much to bear—too much—too much—suddenly his eyes opened and he saw Teena.

## IV

For a moment Jencic was so confused that he thought her part of the fantasy which had come upon him in his sleep. But no, it was in reality, Teena herself, standing there on the porch in the broad daylight, scowling and tapping her foot at him.

“So!” said she. It was almost like hissing, the way she spoke.

Jencic had got to his feet. He blinked at her without answering.

“Aw, don’t come any of your simple stuff on me,” she went on harshly. “I’m on. I saw ye.”

“You saw me?”

"Saw ye? Of course I saw ye! Didn't know I peeked out after ye when ye went out in front o' the bakery and started talking to that cop, did ye!"

"I—"

"So you thought ye'd *tell* on me! Tryin' to get me in trouble, wasn't ye! Just because ye saw me in a alley with a man ye think there must be some-thin' to tell the police about! An' now ye come here to spy around where I live, an' all about it, so maybe ye can give 'em m' address. Ye big overgrown sneak, you, you're in it as bad as I am, an' ye know it. What was you doin' on that roof, heh? Spy on me! Ye better spy on yerself, that's what ye'd better do. I'll make a complaint m'self, if ye say a damned word about me. You idiot, thinkin' ye can peach on me and get away with it! Well, what're ye standing there for, gawking like a sap! Answer me!"

Jencic was stunned by this outburst. He could only stammer, "I—I—I."

"I—I—I," she mocked, fierce as a flame. "Say something, dummy!"

"What must I say?" Jencic blurted out at last. "I don't know what you are talking about. I went to sleep and now I woke up. I do not understand what you mean, about policemen and all."

The girl studied him, her eyes still flashing, her lips trembling with passion. "Then what did ye hunt me up for?" she demanded.

"Hunt ye up?"



"That's what I said. This is where I live, and you know it. Do you mean to say ye didn't know this was where I live?"

He shook his head, "No, I didn't know it. I did not know this was your house."

"Ye didn't come here a-purpose to make trouble for me?"

He shook his head again, "Why should I do that? I have troubles of my own, without making some for you."

"But you saw me in the alley that night, didn't you?" she went on shrewdly. "Come on, tell the truth."

"Sure, I saw you. What of it? That is no business of mine. And besides, what harm is there?"

She smiled in relief.

"Ah, that is just it," she purred. "What harm is there in that! A girl can be in an alley without there being wrong about it. I was only joking about that man. It was a girl that was with me. I was afraid you thought it was a man, Jencic. You see, my garter started to come down, so we went in there to fix it. It kind o' scared me to see you come off the roof that way. But you didn't say a word to the cop about me, did you?"

"No, I did not even say your name to him."

"Of course not, of course you didn't. Ha ha ha ha, that was a good joke of mine, the way I went for you a minute ago. But then it seemed sort o' queer to come home and find you here. It *is* funny,

ye know. Say, how did it happen you come here, anyhow?" Her eyes had narrowed in suspicion.

Jencic shrugged his big shoulders. "I dunno," he said helplessly. "I . . . there was no place to go, so I come here, that is all."

"Why didn't ye go to your own house, where you live?"

"She made me go."

"Who?"

"The landlady."

"What for?"

"Because I wouldn't pay. I lost my job . . . so . . ."

"Oh, you lost your job, did you?"

"Yes."

"You mean you don't work at the bakery any more?"

Jencic looked at her as if she were mad. What! was it possible that she did not know about it!

"Did Vogel fire you?" she pursued.

"Yes."

"Is that the truth? Are you sure?"

"Sure? Of course I am sure. He fired me."

"Well, it sounds funny," she said slowly, "because I happen to know that they need a man right now, so why should they fire you? Krusack needs a helper. The fellow he had helping him is dead, he died three, four days ago."

## CHAPTER VII

### I

KRUSACK lived on St. Anne Street, Number 44. It took Jencic more than two hours to discover this fact, but once he had it in his possession it was no time at all before he was on his way to the place.

He went along vigorously, his coat buttoned against the rain. The cold driving stuff did not bother him now, save that it was coming down in such floods as to veil the houses along the way, and this made it hard for him to make out the numbers and tell how close he was to Number 44. This and that house had no number at all, indeed the whole street presented something of a forlorn appearance, as if it had once been a prosperous neighborhood, and afterward it fell to decay and the more ambitious families moved away.

Even Number 44 looked deserted, so that at first Jencic could not believe that the head baker lived here. He stood looking at the place in uneasiness, this large house which had formerly been yellow, or perhaps brown or green—just which color had decorated its youth it would have been hard to say. On either side lay an expanse of vacant lots, dotted with barrels and bottles and an assortment of

last year's weeds. Worst of all Jencic could see that a good many of the windows of the lower part of the house had been knocked out; the rain was driving into them at a great rate. Jencic did not like that. To be sure he was used to frowzy buildings—at the same time broken windows in a rain-storm did not look like a house where people lived.

The uneasy one gazed at every visible portion of the house, but the place gave no sign, and after a while he went up the rickety steps and knocked. . . . At his third knock he heard footsteps inside. Suddenly the door opened and there was Krusack himself, his hair tousled, his clothes half off, his shoes altogether missing. At the sight of the caller he gave a shout of greeting and began to apologize in the most cordial manner imaginable,

"Come in, Jencic, come in out of the rain! So it is you, is it! Excuse me for not coming at once. I was asleep."

"Oh," said Jencic, hesitating on the threshold, "I—"

"Be quiet! Come on in. A friendly visit is better than all the sleep you can find in a bed. That's right, step in. Never mind the lower part of the house. Nobody lives in it. I get my part cheaper because it looks the way it does. But don't worry. I have a nest, as you shall see. Just you follow me. Well, how are you? Where have you been? Come on—where are you *now*, for God's sake!"

They had mounted the stairs, Krusack ahead and

Jencic following as best he could in the darkness. He did not say a word. But Krusack's chatter was so much sunshine to him, full of warmth and comfort. It is a fine thing to have a friend like that, and so he gladly stumbled along behind, following with the greatest willingness in the world, even though he kept bumping into objects which some one had placed here and there in the dark hall.

"Look out for your shins," said Krusack, by way of warning. "You are not used to it, I see that. Put out your hand and feel of the wall. I will get to the door in a minute."

And true enough, they had stumbled only a few paces farther when the head baker opened a door and waved him in. A moment later Jencic found himself in a room which smelled strongly of cabbage; there was a stove against the wall, and by the stove a woman, stirring the contents of a huge kettle. This woman looked at Jencic as he entered, her eyes quiet and pleasant. She did not speak.

"Take off your hat," exclaimed Krusack. "Well, what are you looking at! Have you never laid eyes on a woman before, or is she cross-eyed! Don't say so if she is, because it is my wife. Haw haw haw haw!"

Jencic was filled with embarrassment. The woman smiled a bit, and bent over her cooking, as if it were suddenly very important business.

"Sure, I am married," continued the head baker.

"Why not? Just look behind the stove, too," and he pointed to three small children. "I am a family man, as you can see for yourself. It is rainy to-day, so they are playing inside. That is all they do. They play and papa works for them. . . . Later on they will work, also."

The visitor gazed at the little ones, hiding their flower faces and their large brilliant eyes behind the stove. So! later on they would work. It did not seem possible.

"This is my friend Jencic," said Krusack to his wife. "He has come to make us a visit."

The woman left her cooking and brought him a chair. The big man took off his hat and sat down, very gingerly, like a person who is not sure of what is under him. He began to shift his hat from one hand to the other, his eyes on the children.

"What's wrong?" demanded Krusack, seating himself. "Didn't you know I got a family? Look at them, then. They are worth it. Most times they chatter like birds, but since you come in they will not peep. The oldest one has blue eyes like the mother, and second one black eyes like me, the third also like mamma, and next time it is my turn. Haw haw haw haw haw!"

His explosive mirth caused the children to hide away completely. The woman smiled and stirred at her kettle.

"That is cabbage soup she is making," declared Krusack. "You shall have some of it later on. She



knows how to make it. Just smell it, will you. The devil! you are all wet, ain'tchu! I can smell you more than the cabbage."

Jencic looked down at his steaming clothes. Then the woman came out of her silence. "That is bad to be wet," said she. "It will make you catch cold. You should change clothes."

But he shook his head. "No, I can't do that."

"Why not?" demanded Krusack.

"Because all my clothes are on me. They are all wet, too."

"Haw haw haw haw!" cried the head baker, slapping his leg, "that is a fine joke. But no matter. You are in Krusack's house. You will take off what you got, and wear my clothes till yours are dry. I have many clothes. My wife will get you some."

The woman put by her wooden ladle and got dry clothes for the visitor, then they sent him into the other room to change. He took off his wet garments and put on the dry ones. They were too small for him, so that when he came back into the kitchen the head baker roared with laughter, and even his wife smiled broadly. As for the three tots, each of them had to peak out and look at the big man in papa's clothes.

"There is certainly a size to you," said Krusack, in jovial tones. "Don't you think so yourself, now?"

"Yes."

"Is something wrong? Do my shoes hurt your feet?"

"Yes."

"Then take 'em off," commanded Krusack, and when Jencic glanced sheepishly at the woman, he went on, "Oh, the devil, don't be so full of airs. She has seen a man's foot before this, though maybe not so big as yours. Those shoes are too small for you. Take 'em off an' warm your feet."

Jencic pulled off the shoes. It was impossible to resist this Krusack. Ah . . . it was a blessing to be rid of such tight shoes. . . . Now he was comfortable, thoroughly comfortable. The fire was warm. He could see bits of live flame through a crack in the side of the stove. This was pleasant to look at, and besides he kept smelling at the cabbage soup, which was almost as good as tasting it. Nevertheless he had not forgotten about the job, and he was about to mention it—when Krusack spoke up,

"Now your clothes must be dried."

The woman took his wet clothes and hung them back of the stove.

"I got a good wife," observed Krusack judiciously, "only she is something like you, Jencic: she does not do much thinking. She needs somebody to tell her what to do. But I can do that."

Jencic nodded. He was thinking of that job, harder than ever. Fear came stealing into his heart.

What if Teena had lied to him! Krusack wasn't saying a word about a helper. Maybe—

"She is a good cook," Krusack went on, and pointed out his wife, as if Jencic could not see her with his own eyes. "American women cannot cook so well. They talk instead, and that is bad, because there are few eggs from cackling hens. But just look at my woman, she is always making something. Later on, when it is summer time, she will take a big sack and go to the market every Saturday night. When it is late and the prices are cheap she will buy tomatoes and onions, then she will carry home a big load such as a horse would hate to carry, and afterward she will get vinegar and sugar and spices, and make a fine mess of it all. That is how she does it, to put in jars and keep for the winter, so we will not have to pay hold-up prices to the damned middleman. A man can have fine things to eat when he has got a wife. And best of all, there are the young ones."

The visitor turned his slow gaze upon the children, whereupon they darted back behind the stove.

"Have you a wife?" said the woman, in a friendly way.

"No," said Jencic.

"You should get one," she went on quietly. "It is not good for you to live all alone."

"H'm," said Krusack, thoughtfully stroking his black mustaches, "that is a good idea, old woman, even though I did not put it into your head. An-

other hundred years of living with me and you will have a head on you. Jencic, it is the truth, what she says.”

The woman regarded the big stammering visitor with soft eyes. “You are lonely?” she asked.

“Lonely!” broke in the head baker. “What a question! Of course he is lonely, eh, Jencic? And what is more, you will always be so, till you get a family. It will grow worse the older you get, besides. Look at me, and then look at you. When it rains you are sad, but as for me, I do not care. I have my house and my woman and kids, and there is the cabbage soup and my pipe if I want it, so let it rain and be damned. Let it snow, if it wants to, I do not care. But you—well, it is not that way with you, is it?”

He looked at Jencic expectantly, but seeing no sign of an approaching reply, he went on,

“Yes, it is the truth, you are too much by yourself. There are many people in the city, but if you have not got anybody for your own heart it is worse than if there was nobody at all. That is why you should get married. Why don’t you pick out some good girl who can work hard! If she is not your own nationality, what of that? In the Old Country it might make trouble, but here in America everything is different. Look at me. I am Bulgarian, but I have a wife who is Russian. What is the difference, though, Bulgar or Russ, so long as people behave? The children, what are they! Per-

haps they are Hungarian goulash, but no matter. There are many fine peoples, except for Turks and the like of that. Only for the love of the Virgin don't marry a Jew. They are a bad people, in the Old Country and here also.

The head baker fell silent, stroking his mustache and nodding with his thoughts. The children began to draw out from behind the stove, making little cheeping sounds by way of conversation. Suddenly the father looked up, saying to them in a loud voice,

"Well, chicks, do not be afraid of the big man. He is not the dog next door. He will not bite. Come play with him."

At this the little ones scampered back into hiding, silent as before. The mother glanced at them absently. This talk of lands across the sea had deepened the hushed sobriety of her face. She said to Jencic, speaking very gently,

"You are homesick? For the Old Country?"

"I—I—I do not know," stammered Jencic. "I do not remember—only a little. Sometimes I feel like homesick, but I do not know what for. I am just homesick, that is all."

"You must get a transfer for that," said Kru-sack brightly, "the same as when you change street-cars. Then you can get away from your homesickness, and make a new family for yourself, here in America. But let us talk about something else. Tell me, where do you work now?"

Jencic's heart gave a sudden leap. "I do not work any place," he answered. "I lost my job. Vogel he made a machine, so—"

"Sure, sure, I know, but didn't you get you another job? You don't mean you are loafing since then!"

"Yes."

"The devil you say! Well, you are a queer fellow, and that is the nicest way it can be put, too. You stay idle, do you, because you lose your job! Well, some people would say—but I won't say that. Tell me, what are you going to do? Are you looking for a job?"

"Yes," said Jencic, "I . . . I—"

"So that is how it is, eh! Well, maybe there is something I can do for you. Do you know my helper has been dead for three days? Yes, it is true. He took a notion to have the flu or something like that, and in the wink of an eye he was dead, without giving me notice or anything. I went to the funeral, as a sign of respect. They had a brass band and two automobiles full of flowers and a fine coffin of oak wood besides. Who pays for it, I don't know, because he got only nine dollars a week and he smoked cigarettes all the time. But maybe nine dollars—what do you say? Is it enough for you?"

"Yes," said Jencic as quickly as he could, "it is enough."

"Oh, it is not so much, but then there is no re-



sponsibility, do you know what I mean? All you got to do is do what I want; I am the one to be responsible. You must fetch water to the troughs, and sift flour when the sifter is broke and the rest of it, like cleaning the vats. There is some oven work also, but you know all that from your own eyes. Well, I will take you if you want it."

"I want it," blurted Jencic, "but . . ."

"But what?"

"I mean, will it be all right with Vogel? He said to me—"

"Yes, it will be all right with Vogel," frowned the head baker. "I got the right to find my own helper, because I can't work if he don't suit me. It is Vogel's business just to pay wages to the helper I want, that is all. Don't worry, it is our union that runs the bakery, not Vogel. He would not dare open his little face like a pie, for fear we should strike on him. Well, old woman, let us eat, what do you say! My new helper must get strength into him."

The woman put dishes on the table. Jencic watched her, but he did not really see what she was doing. So much good fortune had turned his wits upside down, he could not take it in all at once. A job with Krusack—nine dollars a week—a fine hot meal of cabbage soup. It was too much. He could not say a word.

"Come on," cried Krusack, and they took their places.

The woman served them, and afterward she also sat down. As for the little ones, they came creeping out from the stove one by one, drawn by the clatter of spoons and the good smell. They sat close to the mother, their round little faces barely above the table, their great eyes watching the stranger as they ate.

When they were all finished, Jencic said something by way of thanks. He spoke of the cabbage soup, and also of the new job.

"That is nothing," exclaimed the head baker. "You are a good worker, so I will gain as much as you do. Besides," he went on with a grave face, "I . . . I do it for my brother."

Jencic did not understand.

"I got a young brother," said Krusack heavily, "only I do not know where he is. He come to America four years ago, but he got lost. Maybe he is dead. I have spent much money, but we cannot find where he is. He is so proud he would not write back home to the Old Country if he is not doing well. Maybe he is like you, off alone, by hisself, and needing a little help, maybe. . . ."

"I should bring my bottle," said Jencic, "so I could treat you with whisky."

The woman turned around and looked at him.

"What!" cried the head baker, "whisky, you say! No, my friend, that is something I do not do. Since I am married I do not drink at all, and between you and me, it would better if you done the same.

My wife is right. She says it will ruin a family for the man to drink, and that is my idea also. So don't offer me a drink, whatever you do, because I do not touch that stuff at all."

Jencic was gaping in amazement. What was Krusack saying! Had he taken too much cabbage soup, or was this another of his strange jests!

"By the way," said the head baker hurriedly, "have you got your papers yet that I got for you from O'Brien, the councilman?"

"Yes."

"Fine, fine, that's the stuff. You will need those papers, maybe sometime. All kinds of things take citizenship papers here in America. It is something like passport papers in the Old Country; if you have no papers you are in a fix, but if you got some you are all right. America is a kind of a big union, see? Everybody lives together and does their work, and if anybody is an outsider he may get some damn' bad treatment. Later on you will see how it is, when you come to vote."

"Vote," said Jencic, "what is that?"

"Why, it is the way they fix it so the city will get run the way it should, councilmen and the mayor, and the rest of it. It happens on a certain day, and they have different sides, like a game. Last time I voted for O'Brien. He is a fine man. You should see the automobile he bought hisself. You must vote for him."

"All right. I will vote for him," and Jencie nodded.

"I tell you another thing," continued Krusack. "You must join the union some time. It is the only way to do. It will make things easy for you when you work. When you get in the union they will teach you that a boss cannot fire you and leave you to starve in the street. That may be in old times, but here is to-day and we are in America, too. All the workers in the union hang together, and when there is trouble, it is the boss who gets the short end of the club. A man has got a right to a job, if he is a citizen. Sure! Didn't you ever think that before?"

Jencie reflected. . . . "Maybe that was the way, when I lost my job," he said slowly. "I thought to myself, What is this? I am a worker and I done what I am told to do, so why is it they take my job and give it to a machine. I do not think Vogel should do that, so one day I said inside myself, I will go to him and ask him for my job back and if he don't give it to me I will pick him up and bust him to pieces."

"Whew!" cried Krusack, straightening up in his chair, "you don't want to talk like that! No, that is not the way to do it. When the union has a strike, maybe somebody gets hit on the head with a rock, but as for going up to the boss and breaking in his face, no no no, that will not get you any place, except in jail. But come, you must change your

clothes and we will go to work. It is getting time."

Jencic got back into his own clothes, and after a little more talk the two men went down stairs. They reached the lower hall, whereupon the head baker began to act very strangely. He peeped back up the stairs, he listened, and then he cautiously pulled up a board in the floor and produced a bottle,

"Sh-h-h-h-h, do not speak loud. Why not! We got to celebrate your new job with me. Go ahead, take a good one."

Jencic grinned; he took the bottle. The head baker also took a good one, after which he carefully replaced his treasure.

"It is all because of my woman," he explained, as they went out. "Her father got hisself in prison because he shot a man when he was drunk. So she is crazy mad with everybody that drinks, even beer, think o' that! I say to her, Well, there are people and people! I try to tell her I do not carry guns. so how can I shoot a man and go to prison when I am drunk? But it is no use to talk, she gets so mad. That is why I got to drink some place besides home. I keep some caraway seed in my pocket, from the bakery, see? Then when I drink I eat some of it and it makes the breath sweet again. But otherwise she is all right, and a good cook, too, as you can see. Look, it has quit raining."

Jencic looked up. The yellow sun was shining in the sky. The air had turned calm and mild. It

was no longer unpleasant to be out in the street.

"Yes, so it goes," observed Krusack sagely. "A little while ago the sky was all dark, and now it is all bright. It is like the old saying, 'After the dark comes the light.'"

"That is true," said Jencic.

"But the devil of it is," continued the head baker, "that after the light comes the dark again. . . ."



## CHAPTER VIII

### I

JENCIC's return to the bakery was a triumph altogether too wonderful for him to digest at one time, so that he proceeded somewhat after the fashion of a cow who has been turned into a fine rich field of grass. Such a cow bundles away into her first stomach as much as she can hold, and afterward, when the hour is not so crowded, she regurgitates it, and chews it up again, and thus really absorbs it. And so of Jencic. He went to work at once, but it was only in the after days, when he had chewed and chewed at his cud, that the man came really to appreciate what had happened to him.

A miracle and a daily blessing, this new job of his. Imagine Jencic as an assistant to the great Krusack himself! Yet there was no need to imagine it, for the reason that it was a fact. "I will show you how it is," said the head baker, and then while Jencic looked on with wide eyes Krusack took out a stub of a pencil and strode over to the paper sheet where all the employees of the bakery were listed; with a sweep of the pencil he crossed out the word "laborer" opposite Jencic's name, and wrote "baker's helper."

"Now you must clean the vats," announced Kru-

sack, "and be sure to do it good, otherwise it might sour the bread."

The baker's helper gazed long and steadily upon the vats which must be clean, lest the bread turn sour. Then he went for water, and picked up a scrubbing brush and fell to work. A flame was kindling in the heart of that big man: worship for Krusack, and passion for the task in hand. So the vats might let the bread get sour, eh! Not while Jencic had arms. What a scouring he gave those vats, not only that evening but every evening,—their daily bruising, the head baker called it.

"You will wear those vats out," laughed Krusack, and Jencic grinned and ducked his head, and worked away, now at the vats, now at the sifter, according as the master directed him. Sometimes as he passed back and forth he caught sight of the paper sheet, with the words "baker's helper" opposite his name, whereupon he trembled with the wonder of it all. No longer a mere carrier of burdens, but an assistant in the actual making of bread. He did not look with scorn upon his former job, nevertheless he gloried in what he had become.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Pete, the second baker, who was always being ugly, "you won't last long around here."

"No?" said Krusack, coming up. "Well, we shall see about that, and as for you, you keep your words to the other end of the room, where your mixing troughs are."

Pete snarled, but Jencic did not mind. He could see, from the way that the second baker went off, that Krusack was master here, Krusack and no other. Even Vogel himself had very little to say when he pattered into the bakeroom on one of his tours of inspection, because of Krusack. The little redheaded German was nothing but a fixture. It was Krusack who ran the bakery, Krusack who held it in the hollow of his hand. Jencic relied upon the head baker as some people are said to rely upon God.

"Here he comes again," whispered Krusack one night, and Jencic looked up to see the proprietor strutting toward them. "Don't let on ye see 'im. Just push them racks up a little closer and we'll put in the pans, the same as if he wasn't around."

The head baker stepped to the oven, threw open the door, and peered in over the hot bricks. The heat was just right, according to the way it felt on his face.

Krusack proceeded to take down from a rack one of those enormously long handled wooden shovels which the bakers call a peel, at which Jencic began to have his doubts. Time and time again he had seen Krusack and his helper put in the bread, but now that helper was dead, and Jencic had to take his place. What if he could not feed in the pans as he should! The Devil take Vogel for coming around just at this time; he was doing it on purpose, to see how Jencic was going to acquit himself!

"All right," said the head baker, as if it were the most natural situation in the world.

With this Krusack drew back the peel until the wide flat end rested on the lip of the oven. Jencic picked up a row of pans and placed them on the peel. Immediately Krusack pushed it into the back of the oven, deftly unloaded the pans and brought it back for more. Jencic gave it another row of pans, and in went the peel again. Well, he was doing it, but not as it ought to have been done. He should have been twice as fast, he should have given the pans just such a deft rapid slide as to land them on the peel before the peel stopped moving, so that Krusack need never have paused with his instrument. In and out, in and out without stopping, that was the way to have done it. Jencic knew that, but he was so painfully aware of Vogel's eyes in his back that he could not help blundering, and that was all there was to it. He was in despair.

"Keep it up," said Krusack. "You do fine. In a week you will be like a old hand, it is the truth."

Poor Jencic could not imagine it to be the truth, still he managed to take heart. Ah, this Krusack, this Krusack, what a spring of cold water he was, reviving a body and helping in so many ways. Let Vogel stand back there and watch as much as he liked, so long as Krusack had an encouraging word for him.

· Presently there came a tinkle from the bell that

the wagoners rang when they had something to send up.

"Go answer," said Krusack to his helper. "I can put in what pans is left."

Jencic hastened to obey. He was glad it should be his place to answer that bell, because of the machine down there. It was a pleasure to open the slide in the wall and gaze down into the storeroom, a very great pleasure indeed. The alley door was open. A wagoner had backed his load of flour up close to the conveyor, and now he stood holding a sack, ready to put it on the instant Jencic pulled the lever and set the machinery to going. No doubt he thought Jencic a loafer for not pulling the lever sooner than he did, but it was not that; it was simply that Jencic was enjoying his moment of power.

"You devil of a machine," said the big man to himself, "you're not so fine as you think you are. Look at you, you can't move at all, can't even move, unless I let you."

Then he took hold of the lever and pulled it. The machinery gave out a growl and a rumble; it began to move; the conveyor climbed up and up, carrying the sacks of flour into the bakeroom. Jencic seized them as they appeared, his face serene. If he had been a cat he would have purred. For there was no end of comfort and peace within that big frame of his. Strange how everything worked out. A little while ago and this machine had threatened

to blot out his very existence; now they were working together like two hands, a right hand and a left hand. What a splendid flood of light had followed upon his darkness. . . .

## II

And yet all these fine happenings did not exhaust the light which had descended upon Jencic. Mrs. Posilipo saw to that.

Mrs. Posilipo kept the lodging house where Teena lived, and where Jencic slept on the porch that rainy night. In his excitement over the chance of a job from Krusack he had hurried off without his satchel. The next morning he came back for it. The thing seemed to have disappeared. Jencic was alarmed. He rang the bell, and in a moment the door opened and there stood a short dark woman, wonderfully fat save for two tiny feet, with a round face which glistened like oil, a number of dimples, and a soft way of talking.

"Good morning," said she, as pleasant as if Jencic were a man of importance.

"I forgot my satchel," said Jencic. "I . . ."

The woman drew aside so that he could see past her into the hall. She pointed with a fat little finger, "Is that it?"

"Yes," and Jencic walked into the house and started to pick it up. It was an immense relief to find it again.



"But where are you going?" she exclaimed, smiling up at him.

"I am going to get a room."

"Then you are already in the right place," she declared. "Haven't you ever heard of Posilipo's lodging house? No? That is funny, I don't understand it. Maybe you have just come to the city, because my place is the best around here, and everybody talks about it, what fine people I have in my house, and such things. All my lodgers are ladies and gentlemen, every one of them, and there is no noise to speak of, except on Saturday nights and holidays. I can let you have a fine room, with a window that looks out on the alley, and everything nice and comfortable. Come, I will show you. It is dirt cheap—only \$1.75 a week."

Jencic had been steeling himself against the whole idea, not only because it is a good habit to resist people who want to sell you something, but because he was afraid the rent here would be too much. The best place in the neighborhood—ladies and gentlemen—a fine room—no, this was not the place for him. But when she said, "only \$1.75 a week," he changed his mind, and followed her up the stairs, taking his satchel with him.

The room was on the third floor, a kind of cul de sac at the end of the hall. It was exactly as Mrs. Posilipo had described it. There was the window with an excellent view out on the alley, and in addition there was a bed, a chair, some nails to

hang clothes on, and a mirror in a fine frame of gold. Jencic liked the place, and after the landlady had once more recited its advantages he said he would take it.

He had to pay her in advance, after which she went out and left him alone.

Jencic stood in the middle of the little room, gazing slowly about. Well, he had changed his quarters again. So this was his new home. . . . But it was a good room, fully as good as the one he had before, and cheaper, besides. Everything had come out all right. In spite of his fears nobody had stolen his satchel, and here he was, housed at a saving of a quarter of a dollar a week.

He took off his coat and shoes and opened his satchel. Wrapped up in a handkerchief he found half a loaf of stale bread and a handful of onions. It was not much, but he could make it do this time. Later on he would go out and get a lot of good things to eat; but first he must sleep. It had been a good many days since he had slept well, and so he munched at the bread for a while and afterward rolled over on the bed. A good bed, although there were some hard lumps in it, here and there, at somewhat inconvenient places. . . . Yet if you are going to save a quarter of a dollar a week you must be willing to accept a few lumps.

It was clear to Jencic, as he lay there on his new bed, that he was still hungry. But no matter. Along in the afternoon he would wake up rested

and go get some meat, and other things. It would not hurt him to go hungry this one time. Better than food was this chance to lie down and rest, and think about everything that had happened. Funny how much things had changed with him, just in the last few weeks. A change of jobs, a change of lodging houses. Here he was, living on a different street than before, and in the same house with Teena. . . . Or did she live here, after all? She had told him this was her house, but Jencic had neither seen her nor heard her since coming into the place. . . . Well, maybe he would find out later on, whether she lived here or not. . . .

### III

He found out that afternoon. It was growing along toward evening, and Jencic was returning from a shopping expedition, his arms full of this and that kind of food, good solid things such as a baker's helper had to have. As he came into the front hall of Mrs. Posilipo's lodging house he heard music, and as he went up the stairs he heard it more plainly than before. Somebody was playing music in the room at the head of the stairs on the second floor, an accordion, or maybe a concertina . . . yes, more likely it was a concertina, the music was so light, and gay, and quick.

Jencic went on up to his own room. The music followed him. He did not like tunes to be brisk

and sharp, nevertheless he listened to it as he undid his parcels and stored away his food.

All at once it seemed to Jencic that a voice broke in upon the music on the floor below. The voice spoke and the music stopped. Afterward there was the sound of the concertina again, but it was not long before the music paused once more—because of that voice making itself heard. It was curious, but the moment he heard that voice, Jencic disliked it. There was something about it which grated on him, a very unusual circumstance, because Jencic was not the kind of a person who was easily annoyed. But this voice—it was so oily and strong, or something like that—anyhow he did not like it at all.

It kept up like that for some time, first music, then voice, and later on the concertina again, until finally the music seemed to halt for good. Jencic heard a door open, he heard footsteps on the floor below. The footsteps halted. There were voices, the voice of Teena and the voice that had alternated with the music. No use denying it, that voice belonged to a man.

Jencic took off his shoes and tiptoed out into the hall. Very cautiously he leaned over the balustrade. It was impossible to see, but he could hear.

“I got to go,” said the man’s voice.

“You’re coming to-morrow, ain’tchu?” It was Teena’s voice.

“Dunno.”

"Why not?"

"Don't think I can."

"Make it the next day then."

"Don't think I can do that, either."

"Well, anyhow," said Teena, "we'll go to the Arcade Saturday night same as usual."

"Dunno about that," growled the man. "I may have to work. Lot o' overtime now. Well, I got to go. I'll send ye a letter if I can go. Let's leave it that way."

"But—"

"Say! I told ye I got to go. Don't always be hangin' on like that. I said I'd send ye a letter if I could take ye to the Arcade Saturday night, and that's the best I can do."

"All right," said Teena, "but be sure. Good-by, hon."

"Bye," came the faint answer.

There was the sound of heavy footsteps going down the stairs and passing out the front door.

Jencic was still listening. There was not a sound from Teena. Huh, that was funny. What was she doing?

He waited a long time. At last he heard her. She was shuffling along the hall, coming very slowly and heavily for Teena. Presently he could see her. Her hair was down and her throat bare. She had on a red kimono. There was a towel in her hand.

The girl went into the washroom, whereupon Jencic went back to his parcels of food. But he

left his door open and he continued to listen. . . .

After a while he heard the girl return to her own room. Again he went out to peer over the balustrade. He waited. There was nothing to be seen, but presently he smelled meat frying. A faint sizzle drifted up to him. Teena must have a gas plate in her room. Probably she was eating her supper, as a preliminary to going back to the bakery. Probably, because it was late, almost time to go to work.

Jencic put on his shoes, then he sat down to eat some bread and cheese. Now and then he stopped to listen, his mouth full of paste. Ten minutes passed. A door opened somewhere. He jumped up and ran to the head of the stairs. It was Teena, dressed for work.

Seizing his hat and coat he hurried down the stairs.

#### IV

The girl was in the street by the time Jencic got to the front door, but by dint of quickening his pace he was soon within calling distance.

"Teena!"

She jerked around to see who it was. Jencic walked up with a grin on his face.

"Hullo," said he.

"What do you want?" said the girl. The evening sunlight lay upon her face, lending it warmth



and intensity. Teena was so neatly small, so like a child in size, and yet so hard in her ways. "What do you want?" she repeated.

"I got that job," announced Jencic.

Her brown eyes turned dark and cold. She frowned, "Well, what if you have! That's no reason to stop me on the street."

"But—I—I am Krusack's helper now. And I got a room in your house, at Mrs. Posilipo's, so I thought maybe we could walk to the bakery together, evenings like this."

Teena seemed startled for just a moment, then she curled her lip and pretended that she did not understand him, "What's that you say? Do you mean we should go to work together?"

"Yes, that is it. What harm would there be?"

"No harm for you," she sneered, "but there might be a lot o' harm for me, if anybody saw me."

"But I thought—"

"So ye thought ye'd like to walk down the street with *me*, did ye! Say, how does it feel to be so dumb, anyway. Don't you know what you look like. Listen, just take a look at the window there, so ye can get an idea of what you an' me'd look like, goin' down the street together. Go on, size yerself up," and she pointed with her finger.

Jencic looked at the store window, and saw there an untidy giant of a man, with brawny fists and stout round arms, and massive shoulders bent just a

little by so many years of labor. There was also a slouch hat, and under it a big meaty face, adorned by two small gray eyes and a nose which more properly might have accompanied a much smaller man. Beside this dusty toil-stained apparition stood the reflection of the beautiful Teena, trim, clean, and very angry.

"Booby!" she flashed, "don't get so fresh after this. I'm not so hard up I got to walk with scarecrows like you. Remember that, will ye!"

She tossed her head and walked on, swinging her hips and never once looking round.

V

Jencic also walked on, but he took care to remain a good distance behind haughty sharp-tongued Teena. Her words had plunged him into a slough of despond, wherein he wallowed most wretchedly, long after he had reached the bakery and gone to work. Not even Krusack's bright chatter could coax him out of it. It was all very well for the head baker to smile and make jokes—didn't Krusack have a house and a woman and kids and all that?—but as for Jencic and this steadily growing loneliness inside him—well, it was different with him, no doubt about it.

Happy Krusack, chatting and jesting and smiling whitely from behind the veil of his dark mustaches. Another time he might have taken Jencic's

silence as an invitation to shut up, but on this night the head baker was rich in spirits and did not need the encouragement of as much as a single reply. He appeared quite able to carry on a complete conversation by himself, whatever might be the lacks of his helper.

"Good!" he exclaimed, "that is the way to grease pans. You will be a baker before your mother, that's clearer to me every day! Of course you do not learn so quick, but when you do get something into that head of yours it stays there, which is worth something. Keep it up and maybe you will be a baker like me some day, and have a wife and kids and such things. Who knows!"

Jencic looked at him.

"What the devil!" cried Krusack, leaving off with his work, "it is a long time since I saw such a long face as you got to-night. A little more and you will step on that lip o' yours and get a bad fall. Haw haw haw haw haw! Say, I tell ye. What you need is a girl. Have you got a girl, Jencic?"

"No."

"Well, you got to get one then. It's easy. You just look 'em over and size up the different ones, then you make up your mind and pick out the one you want. Haw haw haw haw, but I would like to see you choosing a girl, haw haw haw haw!"

The head baker doubled up with his glee, but Jencic did not laugh. He did not even smile. Nevertheless it came about as Krusack had said,

except that instead of Jencic choosing a girl, it was the girl that chose Jencic. And what is more, that girl was the same Teena who had called him scarecrow and other such names. . . .

## CHAPTER IX

### I

THIS is the way it came about.

It was Friday afternoon and Jencic was coming home from the cobbler's, where he had gone to have some nails put in the sole of his shoe. He opened the front door of Mrs. Posilipo's house and stepped in, but he could not get through the hall at once, because the narrow way was blocked by his fat little landlady and Teena, though it must be said that Mrs. Posilipo alone would have been enough to embarrass it.

Neither of them paid any attention to Jencic. They were intent upon each other, and Teena, at least, was very apparently angry. "I tell you there was a letter for me," she snapped.

"And I tell *you*," rejoined the landlady, "that you yourself saw what the postman brought, and there is nothing for you. Here is the table where he puts the mail, so you can see for yourself, you sweet thing. The only thing for you in two days has been that letter from the grocer, about paying what you owe him, probably."

"My letter was to come day before yesterday," persisted Teena, "so if it did not come to-day it

must have come yesterday or the day before and you kept it."

Mrs. Posilipo gave her a gentle smile, "That is a nice thing for a lady to say, ain't it now? I keep your letter! Why should I do that? I would blush to have read what men write to you, dear. And if you don't get letters it must be because nobody wants to write to you. What a pity!"

With this the landlady waddled off to her kitchen, and the way thus opened Jencic stepped in past Teena and started upstairs. The girl acted as if she did not see him; she simply stood there, glowing upon the small marble-topped table where the postman customarily left the mail, her face flushed and her eyes strangely bright. All at once she wheeled around.

"Jencic," she called, her voice low and tense.

He paused on the stairs.

"Come here."

Jencic went back to her.

"Listen," she murmured, "I got an idea. The bakery don't run to-morrow night because it is Saturday, so you an' me will go to the Arcade together."

## II

Jencic was still struggling with astonishment when he went to work that evening, and then all at once, without the aid of Krusack or anybody else, he understood the why and wherefore of it. She



had called to him as he was passing by; he turned and she motioned for him to come to her, and when he did she said it—well! that was just the way it had been the other time, the night he was passing through the pastry room on his way to Vogel's office. He was full of trouble that night, and so he had been only dimly aware of her words, but now it all came back to him. She had beckoned him to come to her that time also, and when he went up to her she took his hand and said, "I like you, Jencic, do you like me? Tell me you like me, Jencic."

It was all clear now, every part of it. Teena wanted him to go to the Arcade with her because she liked him. As for her strange actions lately, Jencic understood that also. He remembered that when she held his hand and said, "You like me, don't you, Jencic?" he pulled away without a word, and went on down to Vogel's office. Well! that was no way to behave when a girl makes love to you! It is an insult to act like that, so no wonder she had been turning up her nose since then. She had paid him back for making a fool of her before those two other girls that worked in the pastry room. A regular lovers' quarrel, that is what it had been; but now it was all over and they were thicker than ever; they were even going to the Arcade together, Teena and Jencic . . . Jencic and Teena. . . .

Such were the thoughts that went tumbling about in Jencic's head that evening. He did his tasks as usual, wheeling up bread pans, making yeast water

for Krusack, and doing whatever else there was to do. But he did it absently, because he was thinking things out. Only one little cloud remained on his horizon—the man he had heard in the hall that time, talking to Teena. Well . . . but *was* there such a man! Jencic had never seen him. No such fellow ever came to see Teena now. Ho! it was likely that there was no such person at all, but only a voice, such as comes out of a phonograph horn and is not really a human being at all! And even if there were such a man, what did Jencic give a damn, since he did not hang around any more! There was no sense in—

“Wake up!” cried Krusack suddenly.

Jencic was startled, “What’s the matter?” said he.

“Matter!” said the head baker, pretending to scowl, “the matter is that there is something the matter with you. Yesterday you looked like a batch of sour bread, but to-night you are grinning like a Chessy cat. By the Virgin, Jencic, it is a sign you are drunk or in love, one o’ the two. Have you been drinking?”

“No.”

“Then it is love, which is both worse and better. Who is it?”

Jencic was overflowing with bliss, but it was an inarticulate bliss. It was possible for him to grin and blush, but as for words. . . .

“You may as well say,” declared Krusack.

"Love is like murder, it must come out sometime."

But Jencic would not say. He grinned and looked appropriately foolish, yet he could not pronounce Teena's name. And anyhow, Krusack doubtless knew who it was. It was impossible that so smart a man as the head baker should not know it was Teena who worked in the pastry room. . . Teena and Jencic . . . Jencic and Teena. . . .

### III

All night long he worked and dreamed. Dawn came, the bread went forth into the city, the whistle at the top of the little bakery blew and blew. Quitting time.

Jencic went home on light feet. He ate heartily, and then lay down, intending to sleep. The drowsiness usual to him at this hour had vanished, indeed he had never been so awake in all his life. There was no sleep in him. But what of that! To the Evil One with sleep, when there were so many fine things to think about.

So he simply lay there, thinking and musing and wondering. Late in the afternoon he ate again, even more heartily than before, in fact he consumed such quantities of herring and cheese that had it not been for the excitement of the hour he would certainly have been alarmed at his unsuspected capacity. However, Jencic was not calculating the cost of food this evening, he was think-

ing of the approaching rendezvous. Now he must get ready. It would not do to keep Teena waiting.

Getting ready began with a prodigious wash. Armed with towel and soap, and clean clothes, he went down to the washroom. Here he stripped to the skin, and after a great quantity of water had collected in the bowl, he fell to scrubbing himself. This was something of a task, because Jencic was a large man; nevertheless he kept at it until his skin was pink and white, and the hair stood out on it as blond fuzz. Then he put on his clean clothes, everything clean: underclothes, socks, shirt, and his suit, treasured against the years for the rare sportive occasions which flecked his laboring life. The suit was uncomfortable, yet he put it on willingly, because of Teena.

Dressed at last, he returned to his room. He looked at his strange drawn self in the mirror, put on his necktie, and sat down to wait. . . . An hour went by. Teena was to let him know when she was ready, but there was no sign of her yet. Another hour went by. . . . Jencic was restless. He fidgeted and hauled at his collar, and finally, when he saw that it was dark outside, he took his hat and went down and knocked at the door of Teena's room.

There was no answer. But he did hear a sound, as if a body were turning over in bed. He knocked again.

"Who is it?" said a voice, Teena's voice.

"It's me."

"Who?"

"Jencic."

Silence.

"It is time to go to the Arcade," he continued. "What is the matter, are you sick?"

He heard the bed springs wrench; the door jerked open and there was Teena, her black curls in disarray and her face swollen, as if bees had been stinging her.

"Sick!" she snarled. "Course I'm not sick. What should be the matter with me, you . . . you. . . ."

"I do not know," stammered Jencic. "Only—maybe—well, I thought you was not feeling very well, so you did not want to go to the Arcade."

"Course I want to go," she growled. "I forgot about it, 's all. I'll get ready."

She shut the door and left him waiting in the hall. Well . . . Teena was a strange girl. She herself had been the one to say, "Let us go to the Arcade together," and here she had forgotten all about it . . . a strange girl, full of unaccountable ways . . . a girl altogether beyond Jencic's understanding. . . .

#### IV

Teena got herself ready and they set out for the Arcade, walking slowly and for the most part in silence.

Jencic scarcely knew what was happening. He moved with such painful awkwardness that it did not seem possible he was enjoying himself. Nevertheless this was an exquisite moment for the big man. It was a first experience for him. The spectacle of a man and a girl walking out together had always struck him as frivolous, and even improper, but now that it was a case of Jencic and Teena it seemed the most natural thing in the world. He was giddy with the pleasure of it. An interminable series of little flutterings took possession of him.

"What are you trying to do?" exclaimed the girl all at once.

"Huh?"

"Walk straight, for Heaven's sake," she went on. "First you're three feet away from me, then you bump into me. People'll think we're crazy. Have ye got any money? You've got to get some pennies at the cashier's stand. We're almost there, thank the Lord."

The whanging of a mechanical piano came to them, loud and determined.

"Sure I've got money," said Jencic. "I'll get the pennies all right. I was here one time. I know how they do it."

A dazzling yellow-green light appeared just in front of them, revealing the entrance to the Arcade. There was no door. All you had to do was walk in from the pavement and there you were at one end of a hall full of people, pressing their noisy way



from one fun-making machine to another. Colored lights, music, restless feet and gay careless faces,—such was the Arcade. Big Jencic got his pennies and turned to the girl with a grin,

“Let us try one of these slot machines. That will be fun.”

He dropped in a penny and motioned for her to look, but she shrugged her shoulders. “Aw, I don’t care anything about that.”

Jencic did not know what to do, but since he had put a penny in the machine some one must look. So he looked in himself. It was a series of sketches falling slowly one after the other, in such a way as to present a cumbersome moving picture of a fat woman trying to get into a corset. He rose up with a chuckle,

“It was just like Mrs. Posilipo. You should seen it. . . . What is the matter? Are you looking for something?”

“Come on, let’s go this way,” said Teena hurriedly. “I want to see the shooting gallery.”

She had her way, but it did not seem to satisfy her. With no more than a glance at the shooting gallery she began to shift her eyes about the moving throng of men and girls and children, and before Jencic had settled himself to watch the targets nod and slide and sometimes get splattered with shot—Teena wanted to go on again.

This time it was the slugging machine that she must visit. What was this? Simply one of those

contrivances where you pay five cents and then take a sledge hammer and strike as hard as you can on a rubber pad, whereupon a ball rises in a long high slot enclosed with glass. If you hit hard enough the ball comes up against a gong and makes it sound, in which case you get a cigar by way of reward; if you cannot send the ball up against the gong you get a laugh from the bystanders, and of course you do not receive a cigar.

Jencic had never seen a machine of this kind. He was entranced with it, and when the attendant had explained it to him he pulled out a nickel, grinning at Teena. Off came his coat.

"Stand back an' give 'im room," cried the attendant.

Still grinning, Jencic picked up the sledge hammer and struck the pad. The ball rose toward the ceiling, but it did not go high enough to sound the gong. There was a laugh from the crowd.

"You lose," said the attendant easily. "Try it again."

The big man tried again, and again he failed. Surprise crept over his face. He was breathing heavily. People nudged each other, winking and saying sly things behind his back.

"Third time's the charm," said the attendant. "It's how you hit, don't ye see? A littler fella than you could make it ring, if he knows how to use his strength."

"True enough," exclaimed a voice in the crowd.

Jencic looked to see who it was that said this. It was a man he had never seen before, a dark medium-sized fellow dressed like a gentleman: a flower in his buttonhole, a tinted shirt, and on his lip a mustache. In addition he carried a cane.

"True enough," he repeated, even while Jencic was looking at him.

It occurred to Jencic that this voice was familiar, and yet he would have sworn that he had never seen the man until this minute.

"Come on up front here," called the man who attended the slugging machine. "Let's see what *you* can do."

The dark stranger stepped forward. Teena was watching him with a curious intensity, but although he actually brushed against her in passing he did not look at her. Instead he looked at Jencic, calmly and with mild contempt. Jencic grinned to show that he was incredulous. He himself was noticeably a bigger man than this dude, and so he punched Teena with his thumb, as a sign for her to watch the fellow make a ninny of himself.

Taking off his coat the dark stranger laid firm hands on the sledge hammer and stepped back. He swung back and up, and then down upon the rubber pad with such force that the bell sprang to the ceiling and rang the gong. The crowd applauded.

"It's easy," observed the victorious slugger. "All you have to do is tap it a bit."

Jencic had been displeased to see the gong ring

like that, but this talk of how easy it was was even less to his liking. He could feel Teena signaling him to be quiet, nevertheless he spoke up.

"You can't do it again," he said.

Without a word the dark man paid a second nickel. Again he took the sledge hammer and struck the pad. And again the gong rang, this time more loudly than before. The crowd sent up a laugh.

"It is a trick," said Jencic simply.

Suddenly Teena broke into loud laughter. "Ha ha ha ha ha!" she laughed, "ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

Jencic was startled by this outburst. Why should she laugh like that, so loud, and so long!

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Nothing," she spluttered, "nothing, nothing at all. Only you are right, Jencic. It is a trick, because *you* are the strongest man here, and if *you* could not make the gong ring by a fair blow, then nobody could."

The stranger gave her a hard look for that, but she tossed her head in a violent way and said to Jencic, rather more loudly than was necessary,

"Come on, let's look at something else. I am beginning to enjoy myself in this place."

The dark man, too, was moving on just then, and in so doing he stepped on Jencic's foot with considerable force.

"Pardon me," he exclaimed politely, "was that your foot, or was it somebody's suitcase?"

With this he sauntered off, swinging the silly little cane he had. Jencic was dumb. He looked at the offending stranger and then he looked at Teena, not knowing what to say about an affront like that. As for the girl, she was laughing again, giving out such loud wild peals that people began to turn around and look at her. Even the dark man turned around and gazed at her, at which Teena stopped laughing and said to Jencic in a rapid voice,

“He is jealous, that is the trouble with him. But we don’t care, eh, what do you say! You take hold o’ my arm, like you was my sweetheart, and if he don’t like it he can lump it.”

Jencic took her arm and they went strolling on. So that was it, was it! That fellow had stepped on his foot because he was jealous, and wished he had a fine girl to go places with, the same as Jencic had Teena. No doubt he was prowling around them just on that account. But it would do him no good. Teena did not care for that dude of a stranger; she was sensible; she could see, as well as Jencic could, that the newcomer was foolish. Why, she was almost splitting her sides laughing at him and his cane and mustache and all!

Presently they came face to face with the foolish one. They were about to go by when he leaned toward Teena and said,

“You’ll get paid for this, just wait!”

Then he walked on, leaving Jencic more as-

tounded than the time he stepped on his foot and wanted to know if it was a suitcase.

"He's going," said Teena quickly. Her eyes had followed the stranger. He was passing out the front way, into the street. She bit her lip.

"Let 'im go," said Jencic stoutly. "Now we can have fun without his spoiling it. Here, let's make some music, that will be fun."

He put a penny in the slot and the piano began to play, whanging out its tune with lusty good will. Jencic stood by with the air of a proprietor, now grinning at the instrument, now looking at his girl to make sure she was enjoying it. But was she enjoying it? What made her push back her hair like that, as if her head ached. Why didn't she laugh the way she did a while ago!

"Let's go home," she whispered.

"What's the matter?" said Jencic. She was so pale.

"I want to go home."

"Why, don't ye want to hear the rest o' the piece? It ain't mor'n half through yet."

"No, no, I've got to get out o' here. I feel faint."

She went out into the street, Jencic behind her.

"D'ye feel better now?" he wanted to know. "What are ye lookin' for? Do ye want a drug store for some medicine?"

Teena was suddenly very calm and weak.

"I'm going home," she murmured. Then after a moment she added, "I shouldn't ha' come."



They set out for home, Jencic talking in his clumsy way, Teena not saying a word. By and by they turned off on the side street which was the accepted cut-off between the Arcade and Mrs. Posilipo's lodging house. A dark lonely thoroughfare, and practically deserted at this hour, so that they did not meet a soul, until suddenly and without warning a man stepped out from the shadow of a building and placed himself squarely in front of them.

It was the fellow they had seen at the Arcade, the man who had performed tricks at the slugging machine, and afterward followed them about with his nonsense.

## CHAPTER X

### I

So there they were, the three of them, Jencic and Teena side by side and the dark man facing them. He stood with his feet far apart and his arms folded, yet although his manner was determined he appeared to be completely at his ease, which was more than could be said of Jencic. The big fellow was surprised. But then who is there who would not be surprised to be walking along the street with his girl, and come to such a dark place as this and suddenly be confronted by a stranger! Especially if this stranger were the same one that had been making a nuisance earlier in the evening! Certainly it was proper that Jencic be taken aback by it all, and surely it was no more than natural that he should want to know the reason for this blocking of the way.

"What do you want?" said Jencic.

The dark man did not answer, he only looked at Jencic and laughed, and continued to stand in the way, while he swung his cane to and fro by the handle. It was apparent that he was in no hurry to go on about his business, whatever that business was. All at once he slashed up with his cane and

knocked Jencic's hat off, then he laughed again, as if it were all a rich joke.

Jencic slowly bent over and picked up his hat. "Why do you do that?" he asked, and returned his hat to his head.

"Ha ha ha ha ha! Ho ho ho ho ho!"

"Are you drunk?" said Jencic patiently.

The dark man left off with his laughter, his face suddenly hard and unfriendly, "You ask me questions, do you?" he said to Jencic. "Well, let me ask you one for a change. What do you mean by going out with Teena?"

And now Jencic was completely mystified. So this fellow was calling Teena by name, was he! Well, how was that! How should this stranger know what her name was! No, Jencic could not understand that, and so he looked at Teena, as if perhaps she might be able to explain the puzzle. But the girl gave no sign, indeed she did not even glance at Jencic. Her eyes were fixed upon the dark man, and what is more that pretty scornful face of hers had sobered down to something closely resembling fear. When Jencic saw that this was so he himself began to feel troubled, instead of merely puzzled.

"Do you hear me, you Hunky?" It was the stranger again.

"Yes, I hear you."

"Then answer my question."

"What question?"

"I said, what do you mean by going to the Arcade with Teena?"

Jencic swallowed noisily. He was a peaceable man, and he did not like violent people.

"Answer me," said the stranger swiftly, "before I lose my temper."

"Answer what?" Between anxiety and confusion Jencic's head was beginning to reel.

"I want to know why you went out with Teena. In just about one more minute, I'll—"

Jencic lifted his shoulders and showed the palms of his hands in token of his innocence. "Why—she—it was because—well, we just went, that is all. She said to me, 'Let us go to the Arcade together,' so—"

"So that is it!" exclaimed the stranger. He transferred his gaze to Teena, "That's it, eh! You *asked* him to go, did you? Ho ho ho ho! Oh, ho ho ho ho ho!"

The girl hung her head, sullen and ill at ease. Jencic was troubled by her failure to speak. It was not like Teena to look at the ground, and turn red and white by turns, and say nothing. Nor did Jencic like the tone of the stranger's laughter. There was a threat in it. In short, Jencic did not fancy the way things were going, and so he took the girl by the arm and said to her,

"Come on. Let us go home."

The stranger stopped laughing. But he did not offer to move, he simply stood there as before, in

spite of the fact that he must have known that Jencic wanted to get by. Well, in such cases a person must do what he can, and accordingly Jencic tightened his grip on Teena's arm and started to go to one side of the dark man—whereupon the rascal immediately stepped over so as to remain in the way. Ho! thought Jencic to himself, that is not the thing to do, to get in people's way like that, but since that was as it was they *could* pass by on the other side—yet the minute he tried to go that way the stranger stepped over again, placing himself in such a way as to block their passage.

"Why do you do that?" said Jencic mildly.

It was a sensible question, nevertheless the dark one seemed to find it very amusing. "Why, oh, why!" he mocked, and then with a sneer he turned to Teena, "Tell him why, why don't you!"

The girl shifted on her feet, her face working. She shot a furtive glance at the stranger, muttering, "Cut it out. What d'ye want, anyway?"

"I want you," he retorted, "that's what I want."

"What's that!" exclaimed Jencic. "You mean you want my girl?"

"*Your* girl!" and the stranger broke into sarcastic laughter, "ho ho ho ho ho, that's a good one. You should go on the stage with jokes like that. Say, Teena, who is this clown, anyway?"

"Aw, he works in the bakery."

"In the bakery, huh! Ho ho ho ho ho! So he

is a baker boy, is he! Ho ho ho ho ho! Oh, ho ho ho ho ho!"

Jencic was beginning to dislike this new acquaintance of his. He could overlook having his foot stepped on, and even being halted in the street like this, but to have the fellow poke fun at the bakery,—that was too much. A well of indignation began to rise in his heart, then all at once it flashed over him that he recognized the stranger's voice. It was the voice he had heard talking to Teena in the hall that time. So strong—so oily—yes, it was the same voice.

"I know," said Jencic, nodding his head slowly. "I heard you talk to Teena one time, in Mrs. Posilipo's house."

"Congratulations!" retorted the other, "and to you also, Teena, for choosing such a bright fella to take you out. He is not as thick as he looks, eh! No, he is really clever, there is no doubt about it."

"You come to see Teena that time," announced Jencic. He was thinking fast.

"Yes, I did. Have ye got anything to say about it?"

"Yes," said Jencic.

"Oh, ye have, have ye!" and the stranger bristled up to him like a fighting cock. Jencic was so close he could smell him, or rather he could smell the perfume he had on. This dude smelled like a woman, and accordingly Jencic drew back a step. The man with the perfume stepped up close again,



bristling and snarling, "Got something to say, have ye! Well, say it, you dummy. Go ahead, speak up!"

Jencic did not retreat this time, although the stranger's face was closer than was pleasant.

"Do you mean you are Teena's sweetheart?" said Jencic. "Is that it?"

"That's just it."

"No, it ain't. You was once, maybe, but now I am the one. She likes me, she told me so herself."

"You're a liar!"

"No, I'm not. It is the truth. Don't push me like that. You got some rotten stink on you. I don't like such a smell, so please don't get so close to me. You better get out of the way now; we want to go home."

The dark man tapped Jencic on the chest with the crook of his cane. "Listen," he said softly, "I have been playing with you, because I felt like it, see? But I am about through now. If you hang around here very much longer I may hurt you, so take a tip and go on home while you're still in one piece. Go ahead now. And after this just keep your snout out of my business. I'll see that your little Teena gets home all right. Run along, baker boy, peddle your bread."

Jencic did not budge.

"No," said he, sturdy as could be, "that is not right. It is for you to go home, and let Teena and me go by ourselves. She went to the Arcade with

me, so she must go home with me, too. I don't like trouble, but don't run over me, because I am an American citizen."

"American citizen! Why, you're a damned wop, that's what you are! American citizen! Say! where do you get that?"

"Don't you believe it? You better, because it is so. I belong in this country. Nobody can send me away. Nobody can run me down the way you been doing, either. I am a citizen. I got papers."

"Papers! What're ye talkin' about!"

"I mean I got papers to show I am a citizen. That is the way to be American citizen. As for you, have you such papers?"

"What should I want papers for! I was born in this country. I didn't come over in a cattle boat, like you Hunkies."

"Well, if you haven't got any papers you can't be a citizen. I am a citizen and you ain't, that is the way of it."

"See here," said the dark man between his teeth, "I am getting tired of this horse play. 'I'm not in the habit of standing in the street arguing with dummies like you. Now you take your hand off Teena's arm, or I'll make ye wish ye had.'"

"No," said Jencic. "I won't do it. She—"

He had some more to say, but before he could finish it the stranger raised his cane and struck him across the knuckles—whereupon the cane broke in two. Teena looked frightened, but as for Jen-

cic, he neither let go her arm nor did anything else, except look at his bruised knuckles.

"Damn you," exclaimed the stranger, "you've made me break my cane."

"Well, you should not have such a thing," said Jencic gravely. "You are not lame. You do not need it, so it is foolish to have it. And what is more, who broke it, you or me? I wasn't doing anything to you and you hit me and broke it. Now you should be satisfied and let us go."

But the stranger would not listen. He seemed bent on trouble. "You're a fool," he told Jencic. "Don't you know that Teena is my girl. She belongs to me, and just because I did not come and take her out to-night she got mad and thought she would ask you to go with her, so's to make me jealous."

"I didn't," said Teena feebly.

"You did, too," continued the dark man roughly. "Oh, I found out about it all right, just the way you found out I was going to be there with somebody else. Only I fooled ye and come alone." Then turning to Jencic, "All right, you can go now; Teena an' me got to have it out. Go on, you big bonehead, what ye waiting for!"

"No," said Jencic, stubbornly shaking his head, "I won't go. You go yourself, if you want somebody to go."

There was the sound of footsteps. A boy and a girl were approaching, coming along arm in arm,

the way Jencic had planned to walk home with Teena. As soon as they were safely by, Jencic said to the dark troublesome man,

"Well, we must go now. It is getting late. Good-by. It is too bad you broke your cane, but you done it yourself. You should not hit people, then you would not break things."

With this he once more took hold of Teena's arm, ready to go on home. But the stranger was getting angry.

"You let go o' her arm," he growled, "or I'll break your neck, that's what I'll break."

"Don't talk like that," said Jencic reprovingly. "I am bigger than you. I try to get along with everybody, so you better let us go by. I don't want any trouble with you."

"Let go her arm," was the rejoinder. "It's the last time I'm going to ask ye."

"I won't do it," said Jencic.

The stranger gave him a light slap in the face, "Now let go o' her arm or you'll get worse'n that."

"No," said Jencic, "I won't do it. We went to the Arcade together, and so we must go home together. That is the way it should be."

Another tap in the face.

"Quit slapping me," said Jencic.

"Come and fight then!" cried the dark man fiercely. "Go on, put up your hands or I'll knock ye cold, right where you stand. Put up yer fists, ye've got to fight."

"Well," said Jencic slowly, "if I must, all right."

So saying he let go of Teena's arm and put up his fists. But alas! the instant he struck this attitude Jencic was conscious of being afraid. As a matter of fact he had never fought. True, he once boxed a boy's ears for teasing him and calling him names, but as for fighting with a full-grown man,—no, he had never done that. Jencic's weapon was amiable talk and a profound supply of patience, but in this case it seemed to have failed, and here he was, actually facing an angry fellow who was preparing to hit him.

"Come on!" cried the stranger, and without any more ado he launched out with his fist, catching Jencic in the stomach in such a way as to take away his wind and leave an awful pain in its stead. Jencic was thoroughly frightened. He made no attempt to defend himself, save that he fanned about a little with his clumsy fists. A second blow and the world began to reel, then a sudden tremendous jolt caught him on the jaw. He reeled—all at once he found himself sitting on the sidewalk, sick and weak and trembling with horror.

"Well, that's that," observed the dark man, and adjusted the flower in his buttonhole.

Jencic made no attempt to rise. He was panting weakly, his cheeks pale, his eyes flooding with woe and confusion. Crumpled there on the pavement with such a hopeless defeated look he resembled one of those sturdy fellows who have lost the use of

their legs, and accordingly sit all day on the sidewalk, begging with outstretched hand, but most of all with their somber eyes. The enemy fist had hurt Jencic's body very little; the great damage was to his spirit, that timorous palpitating bud which had only just begun to open, after so many dormant years.

"Well," continued the victorious one, "let this teach you a lesson. Next time just remember you're nothing but a big overgrown Hunky, and don't go trying to step out with another fella's girl. Can ye remember that, or shall I poke ye in the snout so ye won't forget?"

"Don't hit me," whispered Jencic, staring up with his sick eyes, "don't hit me."

The dark man turned to Teena with a chuckle, "Ain't he the brave one, though! this fellow that you tried to make me jealous with! Ho ho ho ho ho! And now he wants to eat out o' my hand. Says he wishes I wouldn't hit 'im again, ho ho ho ho!"

"Let's go," said the girl heavily.

"All right, in a minute." Then to Jencic, "Listen, Hunky. I broke my cane on that big ham-bone o' your'n, see? Well, that stick cost me three dollars, so I'll just let you pay me for it, to buy a new one. All right, just fork over three dollars, before I paste ye another one."

Jencic began to stammer, "I—I—I," then Teena broke in,



"I wouldn't do that, Louie. He might tell a cop ye knocked him down and robbed 'im."

"Oh, he might, eh! I'd like to see 'im!"

"Well, just the same, he might. Let it go now. He can give it to ye the next time ye see 'im. That's the best way."

Louie hesitated, scowling reflectively.

"Maybe ye're right," he said at last. "Well, Mr. Baboon, I'll let ye have till the next time I meet ye to pay me that three dollars. But just remember I expect ye to hand it over without any fuss when I do see ye. If you don't, I'll bust every bone in yer head, which is one! And don't think ye can keep away from me, because if ye do I'll hunt ye up, see?"

He took Jencic's nose between his fingers and tweaked it violently, "That's to remember on."

This accomplished he took Teena by the arm and led her off down the street. Presently their voices drifted back to Jencic, the man harsh, the girl whimpering. . . .

## CHAPTER XI

### I

It was an hour later that Jencic dragged in through the front door of Mrs. Posilipo's lodging house.

Slowly he ascended the stairs to the second floor. He heard the concertina playing softly, making music in Teena's room. There was also a man's voice, chatting and jesting in smothered tones. But the Jencic who had escorted Teena to the Arcade was not the same Jencic who was creeping back up the stairs, and so he gave no sign that he heard.

Having reached his room he lay down upon the bed, hat, coat, shoes and all, just as he had come from the street.

There was blood in his mouth. He could taste it, and when he put a finger in his mouth and drew it out again he could see that it was tipped with red. His eyes filled with revulsion, his mouth gaped as if he were on the point of vomiting. The very sight of blood had always been horrible to Jencic. One time, when he lived at the other house, there had been a lodger on the next floor that worked at the slaughter pens where they killed animals for food; this man always came home with blood splashed on his boots, and whenever Jencic chanced

to meet him on the stairs he turned faint and sick, just as he was now, lying there on his bed.

It was late. Most of Mrs. Posilipo's ladies and gentlemen seemed to be asleep, or else out somewhere. The only sounds came from Teena's room on the floor below. She was down there playing music for her lover. And Jencic was upstairs, lying on his bed.

After a time the music stopped. An interval of silence, then a door opened. Footsteps and voices, Teena's voice and the voice of her lover. A frank kiss, an exchange of words, and the man went down the stairs and out the front door. Teena went back into her room. She shut the door.

Jencic had heard all this: the opening door, the kiss, the intimate good-night, everything. Yet there was no rage in him, no anger, no hatred. True, he did not feel kindly toward the man who had knocked him down and then took Teena away from him; no, Jencic would never have embraced the fellow for love; nevertheless it was all right . . . it seemed to him natural, and even just, that it should be so.

The truth is that Jencic had been awakened from a dream, a dream in which he had gone floating up and away from the solid earth. Success had lulled him into a sleep: a fine job, America and how men are equal, the prospects of an escape from the old familiar loneliness,—all these things had helped to close his eyes against reality. Jencic had begun

to dream; he had blown himself up with his own mouth, until he took the form of a tinted bubble floating into certain splendid uplands, and then he had drifted against a stranger. That stranger's fist had punctured the bubble Jencic and sent him sagging back to earth, the airiness gone from him, his dream fled away, his vision no more than a sick memory. What kind of men held place in the dim recesses of Jencic's racial strain? Mild soft men, grown tolerant of the yoke put upon them by harsher peoples, men to whom suffering came natural. Jencic was one of them. He accepted his defeat, calmly and without rancor.

All night he lay on the bed, brooding weakly, his eyes wide open. But when the stars faded and a slash of wan light showed in the east it came about that weariness outweighed his woe, so that he slept. . . .

A heavy drugged sleep, lasting all day Sunday. About noon Mrs. Posilipo looked in, and seeing him stretched out fully dressed she nodded and said to herself, "He is like the rest of them; instead of going to mass he gets drunk." She went out without waking him, and Jencic slept on. . . .

The afternoon wore away. He was still asleep. Evening came on. The light from the window was not so bright; it was as if a veil had been drawn over the sky, and then in the softness of the twilight the church bells began to ring, solemnly peal-

ing and ringing, sounding forth in lamentation, celestial dignity, hope.

Jencic opened his eyes, slowly, wearily. The events of the night before drifted back to him, bringing him pain. An overpowering sense of futility descended upon him. The pealing of the church bells was more and more oppressive—then suddenly a ray of comfort came to him—it was time to get up and go to work.

## II

He set off at once, without even taking time to eat. The streets were drenched in concealing shadow. So much the better.

It was still early when he reached the bakery. Only the fireman was there, tending the ovens. Jencic made his way to the bakeroom. The place was deserted, but no matter—the very sight of it eased him. Ah, these wooden troughs, and scrubbing brushes, and pans, and sacks of flour and sugar and salt, what could be more comforting than these things, these homely familiar things! Here was solidity and foundation—everything that a man stands in need of when he is through with a night of debauch and wants to purge himself.

Jancic threw off his coat. He took water and sloshed it all over the floor, and then he got his scrubbing brushes and went at it. . . .

Presently in came Krusack, and when he saw what was going on, he cried out in surprise, "What the devil is this! Come early, did you! Well—but nobody does that any more, don't you know that? In the old time, when I first come to this country, a man would go to work early, before it was time, but the bosses took advantage of them, so nowadays we don't do it. The worker's got a right to leisure time and no damn' boss is going to make him give extra time unless he gets good and paid for it. Who told you to come to work so early?" scowled the head baker. "Was it Vogel? It is just like the little runt."

"No," said Jencic, "I come by myself. I thought I would get everything clean."

Krusack carefully removed his coat and folded it inside out, so as to protect it from the dirt as much as possible.

"So!" he exclaimed, "you done it to get things in order, did you! Well, that is fine, because to-day is our big night, especially for bread, and chocolate cakes, also. Well, I am much obliged, much obliged. You know, Vogel appreciates nothing, because he is a pig, but as for me, I appreciate such favors. You will not lose by it, be sure of that. Wait till I begin to teach you the trade."

Jencic said nothing. He took Krusack's apron down from its nail and handed it to him.

"Why not begin now!" cried Krusack with sudden force. "Every worker must make all the prog-



ress he can, otherwise he is just so much meat for the robber class. I tell you what I will do, I will start in to-night and show you how to mix. Only for the love of St. Stephen do not make a mistake, and if you should see the little runt coming, leave things as they are and start piling cans onto the racks, or something. Come, I am in a good humor to-night, I will show you. You can do it. You are steady, and not flighty tighty, like these damned American wops. All right, forward! Fetch the scales and get me some yeast—it is time to get busy!”

That was the kind of a person Krusack was, generous of his time when he liked you, and full of ideas when he wanted to help you. He made Jencic sift a barrel of flour into a trough, and then hollow out a bay in one end and put in a dozen gallons of milk and water, after which salt, sugar, lard, and the rest of it was added, everything “according to the formula,” as Krusack put it.

“Now it is ready to mix,” he announced. “Roll up your sleeves. You sure your hands are clean? All right, now bend over like this, and start mixing from this end. Be sure to go slow and do it good, with the fingers . . . like this, do you see? It must be just so, or the bread is no good. As for Vogel, I do not care for him a bit, because he gets ten times the value out of us that he pays for, but it is the bread I am thinking of. All right, now I will let you do it by yourself.”

## III

Jencic fell to work, slowly and methodically mixing his material. But there was no elation in him, no joy over this actual entrance into the ranks of the master bakers. Yesterday he would have rejoiced and called it a mighty step forward, but as it was . . . No, he would not make the mistake of dreaming again. Impossible that he should ever become a baker; it was simply that Krusack was amusing himself by causing him to mix up this batch of stuff.

Nevertheless it was a blessing to have it to do, because the work was new, and on that account helped to divert him. Low over the trough the big man bent, working up his dough, and little by little slipping his burden of sorrowful recollection. His face began to clear. He was easier with every sweep and plunge of his big round arms. A calm reassuring strength pulsed up into him through those arms, until suddenly he caught sight of the welt on his knuckles and remembered what that man had said to him. He had said,

"So here, you big bum, I broke my cane because of you, so you got to pay me for it. It cost three dollars. Next time I see you I will make you pay me three dollars so I can get a new one."

A wave of faintness came upon Jencic. The prospect of paying for that cane was horrible. Three dollars was a third of his week's pay. It

represented the labor of two whole nights. Two nights' work for nothing, all because he must pay for that cane, a little stick which was of no earthly account, and which could serve no useful purpose even if it cost but three cents, instead of three dollars. But he would have to pay. There was no getting out of it. That man of Teena's was master. He had knocked Jencic down, and if Jencic tried to escape paying for the cane . . . Yes, he would have to pay.

"Hey!" exclaimed Krusack, "are you so weak as you look to be! What is the trouble? Is something the matter with you, or what!"

Jencic raised up from the mixing trough. He looked at the head baker with sick eyes. All at once it was an effort even to stand up, to say nothing of mixing the heavy dough. His head was dizzy, and in his bowels there was a noise like stones tumbling down a roof.

"Something is the matter," announced Krusack, shaking his head decisively. "Tell me about it, while I finish the dough for you. Forward now!"

Jencic managed to shake his head. He could not speak.

"Is there a girl in it?" said Krusack coaxingly.

"Yes."

"Ah, I thought maybe so. They generally is. Well, what happened, did you quarrel with her?"

"No."

"What! you didn't quarrel! That is funny. But

speak up. Don't stand there like you was dying. What is wrong?"

Then Jencic began haltingly to tell his story, only from shame he said nothing of Teena but simply declared that he met a man and got to quarreling with him, and how Jencic got knocked down and was asked to pay for his cane. As soon as he had finished he looked at Krusack. The head baker rose up with a chunk of dough in his hands. The stuff dropped from his hands and fell into the trough, coming down with such weight that flour squirted up on him.

"I would not believe such a story," he said slowly, "if you did not say it was so. Why . . . he must ha' been a giant, to knock *you* down. But then you move slow, so maybe he hit you and jumped back before you got your fists to going."

Jencic did not reply. He had related the story of the cane, and now there was nothing more to be said. Dully he turned away, then suddenly the head baker recovered himself and began to talk with fierce swiftness, all the while punching his dough by way of emphasis,

"And to ask you to pay for his cane in the bargain! By the Holy Virgin, that's the limit, the very most limit. Pay for his cane! Don't you even think of doing such a thing. Just remember you are in America, not in Europe. Who the devil is this fella that knocks you down and then wants pay for it, as if he was doing you a favor! I bet he is

a Turk, or a Magyar, one o' the two. Well, he will find out different from that. In this country a man can go out with a girl without such tricks as that, you betcha. As for you, you must stick up for yourself, you with your dove blood! Why, there is enough of you to make two men, so why should you let people knock you around. Brace up! A man like you could hit that door over there and smash it to pieces, just with your fist! Next time you see that Turk, just you give him a crack like that, and tell him it is the pay for his cane. That's the way to do it."

Here Krusack went into particulars as to how his friend was to destroy the Turk. He specified the number of blows, the order of their landing, the effect of each, and other details,—indeed, he ranted until it was time to take the first batch of bread out of the oven. But at that point Krusack did have to declare a truce with the Turk, because it was necessary for Pete the second baker to help take out the loaves, and it would not do for *him* to get his nose into Jencic's private affairs. Accordingly, Krusack seized his peel and began to ease the bread out of the oven, Jencic dumping the loaves out of the pans, and Pete placing the hot product on the racks. It was good-looking bread, whereupon the head baker softened, and said to Jencic,

"Notice how just right it looks."

"That's because of the new baker," sneered Pete.

That was his way, always ready with something disagreeable.

"The oven must be just right," continued Krusack, as if he had not heard. "If it is slow the loaves get dry instead of baking, and if it is too hot, why it bursts out ugly, to say nothing of maybe burning."

"So Jencic is promoted," murmured Pete. "I s'pose before long he will be a master baker, he is so smart."

Jencic said nothing. He only went on dumping the loaves out of their pans. But Krusack could not hold in.

"You better shut up," he advised Pete. "Look at the arms that Jencic has got. If you plague him, just remember such people as him will go the limit when you rouse 'em up. With such fists he could smash that door right in two, if he hit it. And as for people like you, one blow from Jencic and all your teeth would be in your belly."

"Hee hee hee," snickered the second baker, "I guess it won't be any danger. Ain't he a booby, just like all the other Hunkies? Pah, the only way Jencic could get guts enough to fight would be to get drunk first."

#### IV

No sooner was Jencic through work the next morning than he put on his hat and coat and went



to the notion store kept by Putinsky, the Jew. The front door was locked, because the hour was so early, but Jencic knew that the little Jew lived in the back end of his place, and so he proceeded to rattle and pound until he came. Putinsky was pale, and shaking as if he had a fever, from thinking that it must be the police. He unbolted the door and let Jencic in.

"I am not opened up yet," said he.

"I want some whisky," said Jencic.

"Sh-h-h-ht, don't talk so loud, somebody might hear you. Come back in here a ways. . . . How many bottles—one?"

"Three."

"Oh! oh! three bottles. Well, you are going to have a party, maybe?"

"How much?"

"Nine dollars, three dollars a bottle, which is very cheap for such quality liquor."

Jencic opened his shirt and got at his money belt. Nine dollars. He put it down, then without a word he seized one of the bottles, drew the cork, and took a long noisy drink.

"Oh, wait, wait!" cried Putinsky, making terrible faces. "That is against my rules, to drink in my store. The smell gets out in the place. It would cost me a big fine, if the police should come. Don't do that, if you please."

Jencic did not appear to hear him. He took another drink.

"Stop!" chattered the little Jew. "I tell you if you do not stop drinking on my premises I will never sell you any more. Get out now, get out, get out, and you stay out if you want to drink. What is the matter with you, it is not a saloon in here."

Jencic pocketed the three bottles and walked out.

He went directly to his lodging house. Teena was loitering up the stairs, reading a letter as she went. At the landing she turned round to wait for him, her eyes radiant, her lips curling. She had recovered herself.

"I just got a letter from my sweetheart," she announced.

Jencic reached the landing and stood facing her. He could feel the liquor working within him.

She went on, "He wants to know how the booby feels, after gettin' knocked down the other night. Booby! I guess that's a good name for ye, all right."

The girl gave him a contemptuous sniff and went into her room. Jencic did not move. His face was working, his eyes growing dark. Presently she came back out of her room, a pitcher in her hand. When she saw him still standing there she laughed sharply and went on to the washroom, humming some tune or other.

Jencic took a drink from one of his bottles. He put it back in his pocket and shuffled down the hall. At the washroom door he paused. After a moment he said, in his gruff voice,

"I tell you something."

"Huh?" said the girl, from the other side of the door. Then she snickered, "You better let me tell *you* something, and that is, you better get that three dollars ready to give my sweetie, or he'll make dog-meat out o' ye."

"I won't pay him three dollars," growled Jencic.

"Then you'll get a beating," observed the girl lightly.

"No . . . he is the one that will get a beating, if he comes here."

"He'll come, don't worry, and when he does I'm going to tell him what you said." She spoke sharply.

"Tell him," said Jencic heavily. "Besides, you can show him something."

"Show him what?"

Jencic drew back with his huge fist and smashed against the door, splintering the panel.

"Show him that."

## CHAPTER XII

### I

As soon as he had demonstrated what his fist could do, Jencic went on up to his room. He did not seem excited; on the contrary, he had the appearance of a man who makes a daily practice of smashing doors, to say nothing of defying a chance rival or two. But it was not that, it was simply that Putinsky's whisky had begun to work in him.

He took another great drink, at the conclusion of which his first bottle was discovered to be empty. The stuff had whetted his appetite, indeed he forgot all about Teena and her sweetheart and the door, and could think of nothing but how he must gorge himself on the food which he kept in his little commode. With curious benumbed movements he got out meat and cheese and fell to eating, tearing at it like a wolf, and swallowing it down before he had half chewed it.

Then he took off his shoes and rolled over on the bed, drugged into the painless reaches of oblivion. In another instant he was asleep.

### II

Along in the middle of the afternoon he woke up, or rather he opened his eyes. There was no expres-

sion in his face. There he lay, stretched out on his back, motionless save for his blinking eyes. What was he looking at? Nothing. Straight up in front of him there was a blotch of yellow plaster, a stain put there by some ancient rainstorm or other. This yellow spot was directly in his line of vision, but drowsy half-drunken Jencic could never have said what it was. Yellow plaster or field of primroses, it might have been either, so far as he was concerned. Putinsky's liquor made up in strength what it perhaps lacked in delicacy of flavor.

Drowsy and half drunk, so that he might easily have drifted off to sleep again—only that just as his eyes were fluttering shut there came a strain of music . . . his eyes fluttered open again. Little by little he pulsed back to awareness . . . a tangled distorted awareness, with whole clots of reality gouged out of it, and titbits of fancy elevated to substance. But as for the music itself, Jencic had some very definite ideas, however muddled he might be in other directions. It was real music, and music from Teena's room to boot. She was playing her accordion, or concertina, or whatever it was.

Jencic began to give heed to that music, that terse provocative music that Teena was making down there. A soft air, rich in invitation, and fingering down into his flesh as light filters into the interstices of a shattered house, until he was subtly aglow with a sensation which, until now, had been altogether foreign to his experience. It was as

if that huge inert carcass of Jencic's was being enlivened and glorified by Teena's playing. What strange exhilarating tingling music, filling him with hints and slaps of feeling—concerning Teena. . . .

He turned his head, so as to see the door. By the door stood the commode, and on the commode three bottles. Two of them were full to the cork—the third was empty—its contents had been transferred to himself. Jencic could feel the stuff inside him. And oddly enough the longer he listened to that concertina the more clearly he could feel his liquor. Hints and slaps of feeling—concerning Teena. . . . Slowly he reached out and got a bottle from the commode, drew the cork, and drank. . . .

The music was still coming, frank and passionate. A violent shudder ran over Jencic. He got out of bed and stood up, fully dressed, except for his shoes. But that was all right. Better to be in his stocking feet, then he could slip along more quietly than if he had shoes on. A second shudder seized upon him, shaking him as he himself would shake an empty flour sack. His skin was as hot as if he had been standing in front of the oven at the bakery, taking out loaves of bread. It was terrifying to feel this way, but wonderful, too,—an ecstasy beyond words.

In another moment he had finished off the second bottle of whisky. He continued to stand there in the middle of the little room, absorbing his liquor, and absorbing his idea. Care had fled away from



Jencic. There was no longer any world, any bakery—there was nothing but Teena, and himself, and ruthlessness. His face felt strange, and when he looked in the mirror it looked strange: mildness had gone out of that face—a harsh angularity had come in—a savage face, carved for tragedy.

Suddenly he took up his third and last bottle, and went out the door. Well, why not take along something to drink! Teena would drink and then he would drink, too. They would get good and drunk together. If she should say, “No, thanks, I don’t care for Putinsky’s whisky,” he would jam the bottle down her throat—then she would drink. Yes, she would drink, and what is more she would do anything else he said for her to do. He had stood nonsense from her long enough.

“I will pick her up in one hand,” he said to himself, “and I will do what I please with her.”

Slowly and cautiously he began to creep down the stairs, the whisky bottle in his hand. A marauder, that is what he was, a great drunken beast, with red eyes and eager feet. A few more slinking steps and he would be there; then suddenly he heard above the music of Teena’s concertina the voice of a man, strong, oily, reeking with assurance.

That voice was a thunderbolt to Jencic. He fell back against the wall, his eyes bulging, his mouth trembling open and then seeming to turn to iron, it was so rigid. A moment before his face had

been pale, but now it was rapidly filling with dark blood. A little while of stupefaction, followed by a hurly burly of recollection. That voice—that man—Jencic had forgotten—so much liquor—but now—so that was it—Teena playing for *him*—they were in her room—making love—

Such were the thoughts which tumbled through Jencic's brain as he stood there in the hall, leaning against the wall. And tumbling with them was mad unreasoning fury. One last great drink from his bottle and he opened the washroom door and hurled it in. His eyes fell upon the crack in the door. Jencic had done that. He himself had broken it, and now he was going to break something else.

### III

Straight up to Teena's door he went, and knocked. It was a loud knock, because his fist was so large, and because it was as hard as a club, and eager to do some damage. Bang! bang! what a knock! It was more like a kick from a horse.

The music stopped. There was a little silence, and then Teena called out, "Who's there?"

Jencic was beside himself with rage. He could not speak. "Uh—uh," that was the best he could do.

A moment of whispering on the other side of the door, and the girl spoke again,

"Is it you, you big dummy?"

Jencic got his voice at last. "Yes," he cried, "that's who it is, and I'm right outside here, too."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I—you—I." He was choking again, his face black.

There was a smother of laughter, Teena and her sweetheart chuckling together. Truly an amusing situation.

"Run away, baker boy," the man called out. "I just washed my hands. I don't want to get any filth on 'em right now."

"Did you see that door I broke?" cried Jencic in a terrible voice.

"Oh, shut up and go away."

"Come out of that room!" bellowed Jencic, "or I will smash this door, too."

"Oho!" came the answer. Then a creaking of bed springs and the door opened. Behold Jencic's enemy, dark and handsome, with his coat off and his shirt open, as if he had been taking his ease. Teena stood behind him, peeping out at Jencic in a surprised way.

"You want a real beating, don't ye!" exclaimed Teena's man, half stern, half indulgent.

"No, I don't."

"Ho ho ho ho! Oh, don't you now! Well, what *do* you want?"

"He wants to give ye that three dollars," tittered the girl.

Jencic started to say something, but his enemy cut in ahead of him.

"By golly, I almost forgot that. All right, big boy, hand it over. And consider yourself lucky, too. I generally ain't so good to Hunkies as I been to you. Well, fork over the three dollars, and then you can be excused. Come on."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when an unexpected blow from Jencic's fist caught him in the face and sent him reeling back into Teena's room.

"I will show you how I pay you three dollars," roared Jencic. "That was one I give now. Now I will give you two more, so it will make three."

"And I will give you something," cried Teena's lover, springing up as if he were made of rubber. Then all of a sudden there was fat little Mrs. Posilipo, holding him back with her bulk.

"Here, here," she protested, "what is going on here, anyway! My goodness, what kind of talk is this for a decent house. Sh-h-h-h, stop, both of you. What is the trouble, Mr. Bedin? And you, Jencic, what is the matter with you, to act like this!"

The two men glared at each other without bothering to answer her. Mrs. Posilipo turned to Teena,

"Must you always be having somebody to make a fuss? Are you a slut that you want the dogs to fight over you? Why is it, that is what I want to know."

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "It's not my fault, or Louie's, either. Jencic is drunk, and he started it. He came and knocked at the door and began to call names, then when Louie opened the door and asked him to please go away and not bother us, Jencic hit 'im."

"Yes," said Louie, grinding his teeth, "but I'm not through with 'im, don't worry."

"I ain't through with you, either," retorted Jencic.

"Hush, both of you!" broke in the little landlady, placing herself squarely between them. She put her hand on her hips and continued, "Say, what kind of a place do you two think I am running, eh? What kind of a place! Why, the police would be in here in five minutes, if I let such fights get started. Teena, there must be no more such rows like this. And you, Jencic, so this is the kind of a lodger, to start fights in my house, and you paying me only \$1.75 for your room. Why, you are drunk. I can smell it on you, and you look like the Evil One with such eyes—stop now! If you two want to fight, you go outside some place else. Yes, you go out back to the shed where they used to have cock fights, but see that you behave while you are in my house, and I am not joking either. Go on, you roosters!"

"Suits me," nodded Teena's man. He turned to the girl, "I'll be back in a minute, just as soon as I punch this idiot's head for 'im." Then he started

down the stairs, saying over his shoulder, "Come on, Hunky."

Jencic started down stairs after him.

"Put on some shoes," cried Mrs. Posilipo. "Jencic! you haven't got on any shoes."

Jencic paid no attention, but followed on behind his enemy, repeating to himself, "I smashed that door and then I hit him a good one. I am bigger than he is, and I will beat him good. I am drunk. I'm mad, too. I will show him."

Louie led the way out the back door, and off through the garden to the shed. He unhooked the catch on the door, observing,

"This is where they used to keep swine, so it is a good place for you."

"So!" retorted Jencic, growling like a bear. "Did you say swine? Then it is a good place for you."

"You will wish you hadn't said that in a minute," said Louie coldly. He led the way inside.

They faced each other.

Jencic took off his coat. There was something frightful about him. He was a big man and he was too drunk to care what happened.

"Now look," exclaimed his enemy, "you can save yourself an awful trouncing by just handing me that three dollars. I'm willing to let ye go if you pay and shut up."

"No."

"Then we'll fight," said Louie angrily.



"Yes," said Jencic, "we will fight. I smashed that door, and I hit you a good one, too. I am bigger than you are. I am going to beat you good. I'm mad, so—"

He did not say any more just then, for suddenly and without his knowing how it had come about he was flat on his back in the straw.

"I told ye what I'd do to ye," he heard his enemy say, "Now just hand over that three dollars and ye can lay there all ye want to, like the last time I knocked ye down."

#### IV

But this time was not going to be like the last time. The way things were then Jencic had got knocked down and the fight was over, all because fear had been uncovered in his heart. Now he had got himself knocked down again, only he did not yield to fear. Fear! what was that! Jencic had no fear; he was drunk and he was mad as hell, that was all. And he got to his feet as fast as he could.

"You want more than a sample, do you?" said Louie, rolling up his sleeves. "All right, then."

As he said "all right" he launched out again. Jencic got the blow in the face, but he had braced himself and in this manner he managed to keep his feet. Nevertheless it was a hard blow, a tremendous blow for so small a man as this user of per-

fume, this carrier of sticks. Big Jencic shook his head, to get the dizziness out of it.

"How d'ye like that?" sneered his enemy.

"I do not like it. I will give you a good one for that."

With this Jencic drew back his fist and let fly, only somehow he did not hit anything but the air. He tried again, and again he missed. It was because this Louie was dancing about like a monkey, now here, now there, evading the big man's swings and at the same time giving him some good solid thumps. Of course Jencic did not mind those blows. He was a large, heavy fellow, and besides he was furious. Yes, he was able to bear those blows—only he would have preferred to give them, not receive them.

"That is no way to fight," he muttered, "jumping around like that. I—"

At that point a particularly hard punch sent him staggering. His legs turned numb and weak—so that he could not help sinking to his knees, the best he could do.

"You are no match for me," said Louie coolly. "In the Arcade I hit the pad till the bell rung every time, and you could not do it at all. That is the way I fight, too. I work with iron, so I am just as hard myself. I can lick you as easy as I ring gongs."

Jencic got to his feet, glowering.

"That was a trick, to ring the gong like that."

"Oh, it was, was it! And I suppose if I knock you flat that would be a trick, too!"

"Yes," said Jencic. "I am bigger than you are."

Crash on his chin! He went sprawling, his great hands clutching weakly at the straw.

"Was that a trick?"

"Yes," and Jencic got slowly to his feet. Bits of straw clung to him as he stood there swaying, his shoulders slouching forward. "It was a trick, but I don't care. I am stronger than you are. I can smash doors and I will smash you, too. And I won't pay that three dollars, either."

They fell upon each other, Louie snarling,

"So you won't pay! Well, then, I will cut you to pieces. That is all you Hunkies are good for, anyhow. You are nothing but dung. They will have plenty of manure for their gardens if they come around here to-morrow. Take that one! And that one, too. It's the mate to the other one!"

Jencic was reeling again, weak and uncertain under all this swift punishment. Bang, and bang again, now in the body, now in the face. He struggling to keep his footing, but in some manner the world turned upside down and there he was in the straw again. His mouth was bleeding. Jencic knew it. He could see the stuff on the back of his hand. But the sight did not sicken him, as it had always done before. On the contrary, it drove him to still greater stubbornness.

"I won't pay it," he roared, and got to his feet.

"Let us fight some more. I am going to beat you good."

"You're a damned crazy fool," cried Louie, slugging out at him. "You're spoiling my clothes with your blood! Idiot! what are you trying to do!"

What was Jencic trying to do? He was trying to beat him good, no less! Such herculean lunges! Such industrious fists! Those blows of his would have stunned an ox, only Louie was not an ox—he was a monkey, and hence able to dance out of the way. Somehow Jencic could not hit him, and somehow he could not evade his blows. A bad combination. His wind was going. But not his will, not his stubborn unyielding will, born of Putinsky's three bottles. He kept at it, and Louie with him, the two of them panting and glaring as they circled about each other.

"Damn' fool," grunted Louie, "don't you know when you're licked!"

"No," gasped the big man, trying for his face.

And then with a fierce swing his enemy came plump against the point of his jaw, and down he went, Jencic in the straw, flat on his back, wheezing like a tortured horse.

"Had enough?" snarled Louie, standing over him.

"No," said Jencic, in a hollow faraway voice. "No, we will fight some more. I won't pay."

Again he got to his feet, but Louie did not rush

him this time. Instead he stood looking at him, an amazed disgust beating up against his anger.

“Then *don't* pay!” he snarled. “You blockhead, do you suppose I’m going to keep knocking you down all day, just for three dollars!”

## CHAPTER XIII

### I

JENCIC went to work that evening as usual, but his friend the head baker did not receive him as usual.

"For the love of the Virgin!" exclaimed Krusack, the moment Jencic entered the door of the bake-room. And when he had somewhat recovered from his astonishment he went on in a rapid voice, "Explain! explain! come now, explain! What's happened? What's the cause of this!"

"The cause?" said Jencic, blinking heavily. Not even a solid fellow like Jencic could drink three bottles of whisky and escape a lingering dullness, especially if it happened to be Putinsky's brand. And so the big man blinked, and said in his cloudy way, "The cause? What is it that you mean?"

Krusack took hold of him and swung him around to the dusty little mirror where the workmen arranged their neckties at quitting time.

"Look at that face!" said the head baker. "I'm not blind, even if you are. Why, it looks like somebody got at you with a meat chopper! Just look!"

Jencic looked. "That's true," he murmured.

"True!" exploded Krusack, "of course it's true. What the devil! You act like it happened in the



night, without you knowing it! Look at that gash on your chin, that must hurt—bad. Come over here, I will fix it for you.”

The head baker led him to the medicine chest, commanding him to stand this way and hold his face that way, as if Jencic were a child. With deft gentleness he put iodine in the gash, after which he said quickly, “That hurt, didn’t it?”

“No.”

“Whew!” said Krusack, shaking his head, “I never saw anybody like you, it is a fact. Does nothing hurt you, you big ox? But tell me, what it is all about? Did you have a fight?”

“Yes.”

“Sure, of course you did. And he licked you, eh?”

“No.”

“No? Well, then, the other one must be a terrible sight, because you yourself are all bruised up. Did you give him some good ones?”

“Yes,” said Jencic, beginning to show a little animation. “That’s what I did. I give him some big ones. I was going to break his neck for him but he kept jumping like a monkey, so I couldn’t.”

Krusack began to arrange his work bench. “Who was it you was fighting with, anyhow?”

“That man—you know.”

“What man?”

“The one that said I must pay him three dollars.”

“Oh, the Turk! So he was that fella.”

"Yeah," said Jencic, really interested by now. "We went to a shed and had a big fight. He knocked me down—"

"What! you let 'im do that!"

"No, I didn't let 'im, he just done it."

"The devil! Well . . . how many times did he do *that*?"

"I don't know . . . maybe twenty times."

"Knocked you down twenty times!" cried the head baker. "By the beard of the Saint I never heard the beat o' that, never! But how did that come, when you say you was the one that won the fight!"

"I won," said Jencic calmly. "I won and he lost."

"How do you figure that?"

"Because I didn't pay."

"Pay! What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean he said I must pay him the three dollars to buy a new cane. When we was fighting he kept saying, 'Will you pay? Will you pay?' But I said, 'No, I won't.' We kept at it, but I wouldn't pay, so at the end of it he said, 'All right, don't pay, then.' So I won the fight, and he lost it."

Krusack was slashing open a sack of flour, his face uncertain. "H'm. Well, you are an odd one. But there is something in what you say. Still, he cut you up pretty bad and you don't seem to mind about it. Wasn't you mad at all?"

"Sure I was mad—when we was fighting. But now . . . no, I am not mad. Why should I be mad now?"

"But is he going to let your girl alone? Did he say he would?"

"No."

"What! Well, it's not finished yet, after all. You will have to have another fight with him!"

Jencic was taken aback by this announcement.

"Another fight!" he exclaimed. "Why, how can that be? He said with his own mouth I would not have to pay the money for his cane."

"To the devil with that cane," scowled Krusack. "It is more than a cane you two was fighting over, wasn't it? Ain't this Turk been after your girl?"

"Yes."

"Well, there it is, plain as your nose in your face. He will give up the three dollars, but as for giving up the girl, that is something else. So you got to fight him again, to make him keep away from her. You cannot leave it to her to get rid of him. Women do not do things like that. They have long hair, but short sense. She will lead you both on, until there is another fight to settle it all. Sure, I know. But now we must get to work. We been talking too much for the work. Fetch some lard and then you go tell Vogel this milk is no good. Maybe I will have to use his new-fangled milk powder after all, much as I don't like it. Hurry up now."

## II

Jencic went off to do his bidding, and when he came back his face was hard with thought. He stood looking at the head baker for a long time. Finally he said to him,

"That is true."

Krusack knitted his brows, "What's true?"

"What you said. I had a fight with him, but that is not the end of it yet."

"Correct," said Krusack, depositing a great chunk of lard in his mixing trough.

"I will get some more bottles," muttered Jencic, "then I will go for 'im again."

"Bottles! My God, you don't mean to say you was fighting with bottles!"

"No, I mean I put whisky in me, so I could get mad. I drunk three bottles, then I went for 'im."

The head baker straightened up from the trough, his hands dripping with the mess that was to become dough a little later on.

"So that's how it was," he said slowly. "You drunk three bottles o' whisky, then you went for 'im! You are so soft-hearted you had to get drunk before you have some backbone! That is the way you put the fire in your dove blood, is it! Well, I am surprised, Jencic. You should know better than to ever drink in a case like that."

"I should know better!" exclaimed the big man.

"Yes, but don't everybody drink? Don't you drink yourself? How is that?"

"Sh-h-h-h! Well, sure, that is so, all right, but that is different, don't you see?"

"Ye-s."

"You sure?"

"No."

"Well, it is easy to see. When I drink I do it for pleasure, to have fun and be sociable—something like that. A little booze is a fine thing to clean out your system and make you feel fine for a holiday or a wedding maybe, but you can't get spunk that way. Listen, I will explain it to you, so you will be sure to get the idea in that head of yours. You go get them racks of bread pans, so you can stand here and grease 'em, then Pete will not hear us."

Jencic got his pans and grease brush and came back to where the head baker was mixing his dough, the head baker who must now turn schoolmaster.

"Start in with your pans," he directed. "I notice when you talk you stop whatever you're doing, and that is bad. As for me, I can talk and work both. It is a gift maybe, anyway that is how it is."

"All right," said Jencic, nodding his head. "I will work, and you talk."

"Yes, but be quiet, will you! Now then, it is like this. Look at how big you are. But you are slow, too. Now I am littler than you are, but I am quicker. Well, what is the difference between us?

The difference is that both you and me are dough, but I got yeast in me and you ain't!"

"What does that mean?" said Jencic, his grease brush coming to rest. "I don't understand what you mean."

"Of course you don't understand it! That is just why I am explaining it to you! If you knew how it was, then I wouldn't have to tell you, ain't that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am using some figures of speech. You don't know what such things are, but it don't matter. The idea is that people are like bread. In the end of it they get ate up and that's the end of 'em, but before that they are dough, like you and me are now,—yes, like this dough I am mixing right here now. The dough needs yeast to start it fermenting; if there is no yeast in it it won't work, and that's how it is with people, too. You are a big hunk of dough but you got no yeast in you. I was that way myself when I first come to this country. I was awful slow, because that's the way I was born and raised up over in my native place. But in America everything goes fast. It is because the country has got yeast in it. So when I saw how it was I got some of the leaven and put it in myself, then I started to ferment myself, and now I got as much yeast as anybody. I wasn't just dough any more, like you are. So what you need is some yeast, so you will think faster and move



faster, then you will be all right. But don't try to do it with whisky."

"No?"

"Sure not. Take this fighting business, for instant. Nobody can fight when he is drunk. I know. I used to fight when I was full of booze, till I found out how foolish it is. Why, when you are drunk you get numb and your fists don't go where they should. Everything is in the wrong place, and when you take a crack at something it ain't there."

"That is just the way it was with me," broke in Jencic. "I felt mad as could be, but I couldn't hit that fella hardly at all!"

"You keep at your work, and let me talk," said the head baker grandly. "Of course that's the way it is. I know. Why, whisky is like dynamite. It will make you ferment all right, but it will do it so rough it will ruin you and knock you all to pieces, and then where are you! No, the thing you need is some yeast, so you will be leavened, instead of getting blowed up. So I will give you some yeast, then you will be all right."

"You mean I should eat some yeast?"

"No, I don't mean that at all. I just mean you should get the right idea into your head, and that will fix you like yeast fixes the dough. All you have to do is to do the sensible way. Will you do it?"

"Yeah, but I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, that's easy," said the head baker, straight-

ening up with a grimace. "I mean if you do what I tell you to do it will be like yeast inside of you. Now listen. Here you are, tangled up with some girl or other. Whatever her name is, I do not know, but anyhow this Turk is after her, too. You had one fight to settle the money business, but there must be another fight about the girl. All right, you must fight him again, and you must do it without getting drunk!"

"Ho!" cried Jencic, suddenly uneasy.

"Why not! It's got to be done. It's the only way, I tell you. Nothing will be settled till you do it like that. You must show you got spunk when you are sober, because what you get from booze is not yours, it is only some borrowed spunk."

"No—no—no, I can't do it."

"What! You can't do it! You mean you don't want to do it! So! you are afraid to fight that man who is not so big as you are, and after I have told you how to do it, too! Damn it, I tell you you *will* do it! You will fight when you are sober, and you will lick him good, or by the heart of the Virgin Mary I will give you a pounding myself!"

Jencic gazed at the head baker as if he had gone mad. What! Krusack threatening to beat him! It was incredible.

"By jimminy, I mean it!" exclaimed the angry one. "You been my friend, but if you don't lick that Turk without gettin' drunk, by gosh I will disown you. I don't want any tub o' dough for my

helper, I want a fella what's got yeast in 'im. That's all I got to say. Just come in here with a bruised up face like you got now, just one time more, and I will fire you!"

Jencic was overcome. He could not speak. It was all he could do to make a pretense of going on with his work. Krusack also was silent, and it was not until the first batch of bread was ready to go into the oven that his brooding permitted him to speak.

"What is that man's name?" he asked Jencic.

"I don't know."

"Must be a Turk," growled the head baker. "Most all the people that make trouble for me are Turks . . . Turks or Germans. . . ."

Krusack heaved a great sigh. He was troubled, that was plain to be seen.

### III

And Jencic likewise, to judge from the furrows in his face. The big man did not speak again that night. He only plodded on with his work, and when the last of the bread had gone off, and the whistle blew, and it was time for the bakery people to go home, he took his hat and coat and shambled down stairs to the street, without daring even to look at Krusack—so that he did not know that the head baker was directly behind him.

Just outside the front door Jencic paused. He

looked about with heavy eyes, as if he did not know which way to go, as if perhaps he had forgotten the location of the lodging house which he called home. It was a fine spring morning, the air warm and the sun bright, a friendly sun under which a multitude of sparrows came dropping down into the street. The night had gone away, and now they must leave their perches under eaves and upon roofs, and descend upon the streets, to peck about for stray morsels of food. Krusack looked at his friend, and then he pointed to the sparrows, saying,

"Look how much spunk them little birds got, and they don't have to get drunk, either. Nobody gives a damn for 'em, and it is cold where they roost in the night, and all that, but they have spunk anyway, and they can sing about it, too. Well, if such little things ain't afraid, why . . . Well, I got to go home," and he suddenly turned and went off around the corner, gloomy and stiff.

Jencic gazed at the sparrows, cheeping and flitting about on the wet pavement. A milk wagon rumbled by. He looked up, and after a moment of hesitation he went on his way, slowly and quietly, like a man who is struggling with his thoughts . . . all at once something struck him full in the face.

His head jerked up.

A little distance on down the street stood the three girls that worked in the bakery, Teena and her two friends. They were looking at him and

laughing. The smallest of the three had half an apple pie in her hand.

Slowly Jencic's hand went up to his face. He scraped off the stuff and looked at it. Apple pie.

The girls fell to laughing harder than ever, it was so funny to see him standing there looking at the mess in his hand.

"Oh, Mr. Jencic," called one of them, "what is the matter with your face? Did you put a poultice on it, because you fell down and hurt it like that!"

"No," snickered a second one, "his barber cut him when he was getting a shave!"

Another hearty laugh. Jencic began to come toward them, his face motionless, without expression. The girl who had thrown the pie looked at Teena, and whispered something.

"Don't be scared," sniffed Teena. "Why, he ain't got the nerve to slap a baby."

Jencic came up to them. The girl who had thrown the pie reached only to his breast. He looked at her with hard solemn eyes,

"Did you throw that at me?"

"Yes, I did. What ye goin' do 'bout it?"

He put out a huge paw and took hold of her shoulder.

"Leggo," said the girl, half frightened.

"What you hit me for?" he demanded. "I never done anything to you."

"Leggo my shoulder, you big stiff. You're hurtin' me."

"Next time you do that," said Jencic slowly, "I will hurt you good. You girls should behave and not do such things. Now you go."

He delivered this speech with profound earnestness, and when he released her she darted off in a hurry, looking back at him and whimpering. The second girl followed her, silently and in haste.

But Teena did not flee. She stood her ground, her hands on her hips and her defiant little head cocked in the air.

"Bravo!" she mocked. "You can make girls run, can't ye!"

Jencic looked half ashamed of himself. "Well, they shouldn't throw pies at me like that. They got no business to do that. But I am glad *you* didn't throw that pie in my face."

"Oh, you are, are you!"

"Yes. You wouldn't do such a thing, though."

"You think I wouldn't?"

"Listen, Teena," he said, suddenly desperate. "Why is it you treat me the way you do? I do not know what to think. One time you are good to me, then you are rough to me. But I know you like me, because you said so yourself."

"What! *Me* like *you*? When did I ever say that? You've got a lot of crazy ideas, but that's the worst one yet."

"It was in the pastry room that time," said Jencic eagerly. "You took hold o' my hand and said—"



"Aw, I was just foolish, you numbskull. I said that just for fun. And you thought I meant it, ha ha ha ha ha! Oh, Lord, I'll have to tell Louie that one, all right."

"Louie?"

"Yes, Louie. Don't you understand English? That is the name of my sweetheart. You ought to remember him, you got the marks of his fists all over your face."

"I remember him," stammered Jencic. "But he is not your sweetheart, is he? You told me you liked me, so it must be a joke you are playing on me, to say he is your sweetheart. Tell me it is a joke."

"You're the joke," said Teena sharply. "Of course he's my sweetheart. And I'll tell ye something else. . . . Next week Louie and I are goin' to get married."

## CHAPTER XIV

### I

IT WAS Saturday afternoon and Jencic had just awakened. But he did not feel rested. Indeed, he was as tired as ever. Jencic was sound and clean-bodied, and when he came home from work and ate and then lay down to sleep, it was his custom to slumber heavily and in peace, and afterward wake up fresh and clear again,—but lately this custom of his seemed to have suffered some hurt.

No sooner did he realize that he was awake than a shadow passed over his heart. Sleep had been a blessing, because of what it let him forget, and now his woes came flooding back to him, as if they had been waiting at the gates of consciousness while he slept, ready for this further chance to plague him. He remembererd Krusack, which of itself was enough to plunge him into a profound depression.

“You big horse!” the head baker had once said to him, “I been watchin’ you when we take out the bread, and I see you never use gloves, like my other helper done. You just take holt o’ the hot pans and dump the loaves out, no matter how hot it is. It is because your skin is so tough, nothing seems to hurt it.”

That is what Krusack had said one time, but alas! that big hulk of a Jencic was not impervious to pain. It is true that he could take hold of hot pans and not mind. But then there are more weapons than hot pans. For example, there is a friend's tongue, and the sharp words that sometimes flow from it. The head baker had praised him as being indifferent to pain, and now he himself had wounded the big man. He had said to him,

"You give that Turk a beating or I will give you one."

Jencic sighed. He was wretchedly unhappy. It occurred to him that he had better go to sleep again, but when he tried to do this he had no success whatsoever. There was no getting rid of the image of the head baker. Scowling and pulling his black mustaches Krusack stood before him, and when Jencic closed his eyes in the hope of banishing him, lo and behold! it was not more than a second or two before the head baker had somehow got in past his eyelids and was standing right up in front of him again, muttering fiercely,

"You will lick that fella, or I will fire you from your job!"

In short, it was impossible for Jencic to go back to sleep, and so he gave up the idea and sat up on the edge of the bed. The air was cool, the window darker than it should have been. He could see that the sky was dark. It was going to rain, after a while. Well, that was a combination for you: un-

happy thoughts, a storm, and no chance to work till to-morrow night! What could be worse. . . .

Presently it occurred to him to eat. . . . It was not a bad idea. When you eat you are passing the time, and besides there is always comfort in taking food into you.

Slowly he got out his food: a loaf of bread, a pair of smoked alewives, and a hunk of cheese which bore the marks of a former encounter with his teeth. He broke off a bit of bread and put it in his mouth. Then he began to chew, his jaw moving up and down . . . slowly and more slowly, because it was more and more apparent that eating was not going to be a comfort, after all. What he had gone to the trouble of chewing he swallowed, but he did not take any more. He simply sat there, hunched over, gazing at the floor, dully musing. . . .

The window continued to grow dark. A rolling of thunder, and after that a dash of rain. Jencic looked up, then he slumped over again. That rev-ery of his was growing more and more melancholy. He could not help thinking of how things had been the last time it rained. It was when he lived in the other house; he had some words with the landlady, as a consequence of which he took his satchel and went out into the street, and got very wet . . . when the night had passed he heard of Krusack wanting a helper . . . he had gone there . . . to the house of the head baker.

Ah, that visit to Krusack's house! Never since

he could remember had Jencic enjoyed himself so much. Every ingredient of happiness had been present that day—warmth, food, and the friendliness of his great-hearted friend. And Krusack's family! the three little ones, and his wife with her cabbage soup and the fine way she had dried his clothes and made him comfortable . . . all at once Jencic clenched his fist and gave himself a great blow on the forehead—he rose to his feet, as if to flee.

But there is no fleeing from thoughts, and so it was not long before he sat down again. Happy memories of Krusack's house, unhappy memories of Krusack's house. Too bad he had gone there in the first place. Because it had aroused impossible dreams in him. In the old days Jencic had been content to live in a tiny room like this, but where was his peace of mind now! The head baker had destroyed it, joking the way he had, about cabbage soup and a warm kitchen on rainy days, and how Jencic should have a wife of his own.

The trouble was that the big man had got to thinking about such things, and now Teena was going to marry that fellow she called Louie. . . .

The rain had turned into a steady drizzle, as if it intended to keep up all evening, and all night besides. A gloomy prospect for Jencic, but at any rate it was a comfort to know that people stayed home on nights like this, and didn't go visiting their sweethearts, even if they were going to marry

them the very next week. No, that fellow Louie would not be around *this* evening, not in this rain. If he were coming he would be here by now, because it was almost supper time.

Supper time, time for Jencic to eat and time for Teena to eat, Jencic alone in his room and Teena alone in hers, Jencic cold and hungry, Teena warming herself with her gas plate and cooking something hot and appetizing. A cozy flame and fine smells down there. Maybe she had coffee, too, which was more than Jencic had had for many weeks.

Why not go down to Teena's room and ask about having supper together, with her gas plate to put warmth into things? No love-making or anything like that, of course, but just a bit of companionship while they ate. Warmth, and hot food, and the mere sight of her, that was all he wanted. Jencic had surrendered. She liked another man and she was going to marry him, so it was all over. Only Jencic was still human, and in his yearning heart and his humility he wondered if a friendly bite of supper together would be asking too much.

He thought it over a long time. It was still raining, and he was still cold and lonely—lonelier than ever, in fact. In the end he decided to try. A pair of his best alewives would be part of his contribution to the joint supper, and in addition he would go out and get whatever she wanted—pork chops maybe, or cheese, or eggs, although Jencic had al-



ways looked upon eggs as very flimsy food, and what is more you could never tell when you were paying for a bad one, until you ate it.

## II

Jencic started down stairs, the two alewives in his hand. He proceeded with a great deal of quietness, because he wanted to make sure that what's-his-name was not there. Best to tiptoe up to her room and listen, then if it appeared that this Louie were really there, why Jencic could turn around and go back to his room, without anybody being the wiser.

But when he came to her door and listened there was not a sound, not even a little one.

"She is asleep yet," he said to himself, and knocked.

No answer.

He knocked again, more loudly than before.

Still no reply. What a heavy sleeper that girl was!

Another blow on the door, this time a really hard thump, capable of being heard all over the house.

"Teena!" he called.

No answer.

"Teena, wake up! Let us have some supper together. I got a couple o' fish and I will go get something else, if you want. So wake up!"

No sound from the room. A sound from the

lower stairs, however. It was fat little Mrs. Posilipo, more than half out of breath,

"What are you trying to do, you big Slovak! Are you trying to break down the door, like somebody done to the washroom! Is that what you want?"

"No, I want Teena."

She caught sight of his alewives, at which her annoyance fled away. Her waist began to shake.

"What do you want her for?" she tittered. "Is this a peace offering you are bringing her, or is it a present. Oh, oh, what a lover you are, to fetch a lady a couple o' smoked fish for a bouquet! Oh, oh, oh," and she had to hold her sides.

Jencic knocked again.

"Stop!" she cried, "you will wake the dead. Can't you do it like a gentleman! Be soft and just use your knuckles, easy."

He knocked lightly, whereupon she burst into windy laughter,

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, you make my side hurt, Jencic. But that is the way to do it, that is fine, soft like a gentleman—only it is no use to knock."

"Why not?"

"Because she is not there."

"What?"

"I say she is not there. She is not in her room, so you better save those fine knocks of yours. Maybe you can sell 'em sometime, when you get a dozen."

"Teena ain't home?"

"No, she is gone."

"Where did she go?"

"She went out with her fella, Louie Bedin. They started out in the afternoon, to go to the movies, because there is a dirty picture she wanted to be sure and see, and afterwards they was going to the Arcade. And here *you* are, pounding on the door for her. It is like waiting at the church and no bride. Oh, oh, oh, it is so funny, excuse me for laughing."

"Church," stammered Jencic. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh! Don't make me laugh any more. It is bad for my pleurisy." All at once she sobered down, scowling at him, "You're a nice one, ain'tchu! Let that little chippy make a fool of you like that!"

Jencic turned to the door and began to knock.

"Will you stop! Keep away from my doors with such big fists as you got! Here, I will show you I tell the truth. I will open the door. . . . See, there is nobody home, just the way it is with your head. She is gone, eh? Or shall we look under the bed, maybe!"

"She must ha' went out," muttered Jencic.

"With her lover," added Mrs. Posilipo.

Jencic stuck the alewives in his pocket and began to descend the stairs.

"What are you going to do?" she cried. "Are

you going to hunt them up and deliver your bouquet! Is that it? Oh, oh, oh, my side, my side, I can't stand much more of this."

He did not reply, nevertheless she hurried down the stairs after him, puffing and chattering, her eyes shining with glee.

"They are at the Arcade," she cried. "That's where you will find them, you and your smoked fish! Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh!"

Jencic went out.

### III

He made his way to the Arcade, walking rapidly until he came within sight of the dazzling yellow-green light at the entrance, and then going slowly, and still more slowly. Little by little he worked in through the crowd, cautiously glancing this way and that, passing the slot machines and the mechanical piano, and coming at last to the vicinity of the slugging apparatus, surrounded at this hour by a press of spectators. Jencic got close enough to see. Well, it was true. Mrs. Posilipo had not lied. There they were, Teena holding his coat and the man they called Louie smashing at the rubber pad, so as to make the ball spring up to the ceiling and ring the gong.

"Ding!" said the gong, and the crowd applauded.

As for Jencic, he drew back in silence. He made his way to the entrance of the place, and there he

paused, weak and miserable, and not liking to go out into the rain again. But suddenly there were calls of "come back, come on back!" and when he looked back toward the slugging machine, what should he see but Teena and her sweetheart, moving through the crowd, on their way out. At the sight of those two coming toward him, Jencic returned to life, and in another moment he was hurrying down the street. Luckily for him, neither Teena nor her lover had seen him. A narrow escape for Jencic.

Once safely away from the Arcade he slowed down. It was dark. The rain seemed to be getting worse, so that the few people who were abroad began to hurry, some in one direction, some in another. Only Jencic did not hurry. There was no shelter waiting for him. Life had become a sieve, with the storms of adversity whipping at him from every direction. All his days he had been a good worker, but this, it seems, is not enough to insure happiness. No, in order to be happy a man must also be a good fighter.

Dully he dragged along toward Mrs. Posilipo's lodging house, his thoughts as dark as the night. A good fighter, but Jencic was no fighter, and so it was all up with him. Teena was going to marry that fine dude of hers, and Jencic was going to lose his job, his wonderful job of being assistant to Krusack himself. It would be a great fall, greater than the time Vogel discharged him, because from

baker's helper to despair is a greater distance than from laborer to despair.

"You lick that Turk," the head baker had said, "or I will fire you. I don't want a helper what's got no spunk."

How simple it was. Give Teena's sweetheart a thrashing and keep his job, to say nothing of perhaps winning the girl herself as a kind of gladiator's prize. Simple enough, but impossible. Jencic had no will to fight. That mysterious yeast of Krusack's,—what of it? The head baker was a wise man and what he said was true, yet this time he had made a mistake. Yeast! there was no yeast in Jencic. He wanted his job and he wanted Teena, but as for thrashing this Louie, sober and in cold blood . . . No, Jencic was nothing but dough, unless he was drunk.

A patter of sound made him turn and look back along the dimly lighted street. A girl and a man, running toward him, laughing and shouting, the girl with her hat off, the man with his coat collar turned up against the rain. It was Teena and her Louie.

Jencic was terrified, for whereas it would have been clear to some people that these two persons were merely sprinting to get home out of the rain, it appeared to Jencic that they were pursuing him. What to do! There was no time to flee, no time to do more than try to hide his big self in a doorway, before the laughing girl dashed by, followed



by her slower and more observant lover—he caught sight of Jencic, hesitated, and came to a standstill, peering back uncertainly.

“Hurry up!” cried the girl.

“Wait a minute. . . . Come back here a minute.”

She came back to him.

The man pointed to the dark figure huddling in the doorway. Jencic was in the grip of an unreasoning fear, his mouth dry, his skin now cold now hot, his heart thumping furiously.

“Who’s that?” said Teena, uneasy.

“Why, don’t ye recognize him?” said her lover. “It’s our little valentine. He’s been layin’ for us, the bad boy.”

Jencic was pressing back against the door with all his might. If only it would give way and let him tumble into that dark house, no matter what kind of men or beasts lived there. Anything to escape.

“Well, why don’t ye say something?” demanded Louie. “What’s the matter, are ye scared? Speak up, damn you! Are you scared?”

“Yes.”

The girl laughed.

“Well, you better be scared,” said her man. “Say, what d’ye mean, anyhow, follerin’ us around like this? Come on out here and explain yourself. Come on, the rain won’t hurt ye.”

No answer. No response.

“Come on!” snapped Louie, and reached out and took him by the collar.

Jencic could never explain how it happened, but the instant he felt himself taken by the collar a violent and uncontrollable impulse caused him to seize his enemy by the throat. Louie gasped and let go his grip. But Jencic did not let go his, he tightened it; the feel of that soft hot flesh had bred a vast fury in his heart, fury and a mad resentment.

"I got you," he whispered hoarsely, and then while he held the rascal in his left hand he slowly drew back his right fist. Teena screamed for him to let go, and Louie wriggled and jerked and tried to break away, but alas! for him there was no breaking away, not from that implacable vise. Slowly the big man drew back with his fist, and he sent it forth, smashing straight into Louie's face. The man plumped to the sidewalk, like a dead thing.

But he was not dead. He was not even stunned. Up he sprang, jerking at something in his pocket and not saying a word.

Jencic could see what it was, nevertheless he advanced.

"I don't care for your knife," said he evenly.

"Get back there or I'll give it to ye!" cried the dark one, getting his knife free at last. "I'll fix ye! Stay back there!"

Jencic came on after him, slowly and firmly, his big hands spread out. There was murder in his face.

"I will get my hands on you," he muttered, "then

I will bust you into pieces. I am going to kill you."

Louie flourished his knife, yet he kept retreating before this horrible advance, going back step by step. "Get back there!" he chattered, "get back, or I'll cut ye," then suddenly he wheeled about and ran into the night. . . .

## CHAPTER XV

### I

SUNDAY had always been an evil to Jencic, a day of loneliness and discomfort, but on this particular Sunday morning he awoke to find himself at ease. To-day was not going to be a misery. Because the great ordeal lay behind him. It was all over. Jencic had won, and now he could stretch his arms above his head and grunt in luxury and ease. Let the church bells ring. Why not! They had no power to sadden him this morning—there was too much to think about, too much that was worth repeating to himself as he lounged there in bed.

Well, that fellow Louie was a skinful of tricks; he had the knack of making gongs ring, and such things as that, but in the end it had availed him nothing. What did his cane and his perfume amount to now! Bah, he was a monkey, not a man; it was Jencic who was the man. Jencic didn't have a press in his pants, except what was put there by sitting down or bending over to pick up burdens, but just the same there were some good legs inside those pants of his, and they didn't carry him running away from fist fights either!

"Huh," said Jencic aloud, "I wasn't scared."

Scared? Not a bit of it! To be sure, he was terrified when that fellow saw him hiding in the

doorway, but the instant he grabbed him by the throat, Jencic threw off his sheep's cloak and became a lion. A very wonderful thing to have happened to him, but true for all that. Let those who understand it explain it; as for Jencic, he was content to accept the fact, and to enjoy the blessing of it all. Fear had gone out of him. And how much better he felt for it! It was like the time he had a felon on his hand and it swelled up and ached like the very devil, until one night it burst and then the pressure and the pain went away and he was at ease again. Louie Bedin had been just such a felon, bringing upon Jencic a horrible burden of misery.

A sound. Somebody moving about on the floor below. Perhaps it was Teena. . . .

What if it were! Jencic was not going to work himself into a fever on that account. He was not worrying about her. She had told him she was about to marry Louie Bedin, but things were different now. Jencic knew very little about girls, nevertheless it was clear to him that no girl would cling to a man who had turned tail and run away from another man in a fair fight. Teena had turned up her nose at Jencic for getting the worst of his first encounter with her dude; this time it was Louie who had got the worst of it, and so Teena must point her little nose accordingly. Jencic had won her, and after this she would wait on his pleasure, not he on hers. Which was the way

things should be, in the matter of girls and men.

Rat-tattat-tat!

"Come in!" cried Jencic.

Mrs. Posilipo opened the door,

"What! Are you still in bed! I want you to get up, so I can do my work in here."

He lay there and looked at her, calmly announcing, "I will get up when I want to."

The landlady was taken aback. She was not used to such talk from Jencic. "What makes you so sassy?" said she. "You must be drunk or something."

"No, I am not drunk, but I am going to get up when I please."

"Loafer! you get up and go to mass, like you should."

"Mass! what is mass! Is it something I eat on my bread, like garlic?"

"Oh, you heathen," she exclaimed. "To think there is such talk in my house, and on a Sunday, too. Now you get up, right away," and she went out.

Jencic shouted after her,

"I will get up when I feel like getting up, and when I do I will go to work. That is my mass."

## II

He felt like getting up at about the hour of sunset, at which time he devoured a prodigious quan-



tity of bread and fish, and went off to the bakery, his head thrown back and his eyes clear.

Jencic was eager to tell the head baker all about the great fight and how it had ended, but no sooner did he enter the bakeroom than he felt himself powerless to say a word. This was because Krusack did not speak to him when he first came in. Generally the head baker greeted him with an "Ah, there!" or a "So you're on time, are you!" On this occasion, however, he said nothing like that, indeed he said nothing at all, but merely glanced at the big man and went on changing into his work clothes.

And of course Jencic had no salutation ready. It was not his way to say "hello," or "good morning," when he came to work. He appreciated these niceties in other people, and perhaps he felt like saying them himself, before any one else spoke up; on the other hand he found it impossible to take the initiative in such things, so that when Krusack did not speak, neither did Jencic. Like the head baker he silently changed into his working clothes and silently went to work.

They kept this up for a long time, Jencic stealing glances at his friend and his friend stealing glances at him—but neither of them saying a word. Finally Krusack could stand it no longer. With an introductory cough he began to stroke his black mustaches, saying in a tone which he intended to sound natural,

"Well, where did you go last night?"

Jencic felt his heart give a leap. Now he could speak.

"Aw," he growled, "no place particular."

He had wanted to go on, but somehow the words would not come. Nor did Krusack say any more. A cloud seemed to have come upon him as he stood there folding his dough and saying nothing. Jencic kept looking at him, and the more he looked the more restless he became. Why didn't Krusack go ahead and ask some other question!

"I just went down the street," Jencic blurted out.

The head baker looked at him, repeating slowly,

"You just went down the street?"

"I mean I met that fella."

"What fella? The Turk?"

"Yeah, or whatever he is."

Krusack searched his face, but there were no fresh wounds on it, no swellings, no black and blue marks, whereupon his heart sank. He turned away, muttering,

"But ye didn't have a fight with 'im."

"Sure I did!" said Jencic quickly. "And I made him run, too."

"What!" exclaimed the head baker, whirling around. "What's that you say?"

"I say we had a fight. He grabbed me, and I grabbed him. I took my fist the way you said I should, and I give him a smash that knocked him

flat. Then he jumped up and he had a knife—”

“A knife!” cried Krusack, in dismay. “What! a knife? Is that what you said?”

“Sure! but I didn’t care for that. He says, ‘Look out or I’ll cut you,’ but I come for him just the same.”

“Then what’d he do?”

“He run.”

“The devil! He run. . . . But he didn’t cut you with that knife?”

“No.”

“Are you sure? He didn’t stick you at all?”

“No, he didn’t stick me. He just run.”

Krusack whistled softly.

“I wasn’t scared,” Jencic announced. “I just’s soon have another fight with him.”

“That’s the stuff,” said the head baker, beginning to recover himself. “You been a worm, but now you’ve turned over, and you’ll stay turned over. That’s the way it should be.”

“And I wasn’t drunk,” continued Jencic. “I didn’t have a drink. I was sober, just the way I am now.”

Krusack got a bit red in the face at that, and went on hurriedly,

“Well, he must ha’ been a devil of a rough customer, to come at you with a knife like that. I am glad he did not get it into your skin. He must ha’ been a Turk, eh?”

“I dunno.”

"Well, what did he look like?"

"As for that . . . well, he was just a man, and not so big as me, that's all." Jencic was wanting to talk some more about the details of the fight.

Krusack laughed, for the first time that night.

"You're a queer one," said he. "You fight three times with a man, and still you can't say what he looks like. Don't you see anything? What about the world, what does that look like to you, anyway? Tell me, I'd like to know."

Jencic's face took on a few wrinkles,

"The world? What do you mean? I do not understand that, but anyhow I am not scared any more. That is what I keep thinking about."

"Ah," said the sage, "then it is no matter at all what the world looks like, so long as you ain't scared. But fetch me the scales, I got to start on this dough, right away."

The big man did as he had been told. He fell to cleaning the vats, his face thoughtful. At last he said to Krusack,

"Then it is all right?"

"Fh? All right? What do you mean?"

"About my job."

"Your job?"

"I mean can I keep it now? You said I must lick that fella or you would fire me."

The head baker was covered with shame, his face a fiery red, his eyes unable to meet Jencic's clear frank gaze. He turned away, growling,

“Aw, ferget it. You’re goin’ to keep your job, all right, don’t worry about that.” Then with sudden gayety, “Well, there must be rewards for all good work, don’t you know that! Here you went out like a fella in a moving picture and knocked the block off of the villain, so you gotta have a prize er something. I tell you what I will do, I will show you another part of the trade, so you will learn it all the faster. Let that vat go to the devil and come here. Come close . . . that’s it. Now see this dough. Well, I got to pinch it off so’s to make loaves o’ two pounds each. That means the dough’s got to weigh about two pounds and three ounces. I do it like this. . . . Watch close.”

Jencic watched while the head baker seized the dough and rapidly pinched it off into chunks, never weighing more than one out of every ten or twelve of them. But when he did place a chunk on the scales it weighed what he said it must—two pounds and three ounces.

“I am my own scales,” he announced, “but just the same it is a good idea to weigh a lump once in a while. Now you try it.”

With a doubtful grin the big man took his place and began to pinch off the dough, doing very slowly and clumsily what the head baker had done with rapidity and great skill. Worst of all Jencic’s chunks of dough were stubbornly off standard; sometimes they were more than two pounds and three ounces, and sometimes they were less, but

never were they exactly that one necessary weight.

"Bah!" cried Krusack, "that is nothing! It is like everything else, it must be learned. I have done it for thirty years, so of course I am slick at it. In time you will get so you can do it to the ounce and have no use for scales at all, the same as me. It is like the owl and the bullfrog—you know that story, don't you?"

"No."

"No? It is in all of the fairy books. Don't you ever read?"

"No, not much, I guess."

"Aw, well, that's all right. You don't need to. Look at me, I read a lot, and I get headaches from it. As for you, you are a worker, and that's enough. God is with the worker, as the old saying has it. Besides, you are a fighter."

Jencic grinned.

"Now that this Turk is out of your way," continued the head baker, "you will have that girl to yourself, eh?"

"Yes," said Jencic shyly.

"I hope everything is all right now."

"Oh," said Jencic, "everything is all right now."

### III

But was it? If everything was all right, how did it come that Teena was not to be seen when the bakery whistle blew the next morning, and all the



workers filed out into the street, on their way home! Jencic saw the other two girls, but no Teena. . . .

The big man hurried off to Mrs. Posilipo's as fast as he could. In the front door and up the stairs, to Teena's door, and there he paused to listen. . . . Yes, she was in there. He could hear her breathing. So she was sick. She hadn't been to work at all.

"Teena."

"Let me alone," came the response.

Jencic was troubled. He wanted to ask if there was some medicine he could get for her, but something held him back, and after a moment he turned away and went on up to his room.

"Maybe she'll be all right to-night," he said to himself, but when evening came she did not appear.

She was not at the bakery that night.

Nor the next night.

A gloomy period for Jencic. There had been a time when the big man was totally unaware of Teena's presence in that bakery, but now it was not the same place at all, with her gone. He thought of her all the time he was working, and when of a morning he shambled back to Mrs. Posilipo's lodging house he thought of her harder than ever. Only it did not seem to do any good, for even when he loitered past her door, and coughed to let her know he was out there, she never showed herself, and never answered him.

Then suddenly and without warning this state of affairs came to an end.

It had been raining and blowing all afternoon, and now with the approach of evening Jencic was getting ready to go to work. He was eating in his little room. The window rattled and shook as if the devil were at it. The rain beat on the glass and came hurtling against the side of the house. Not very nice weather, but storm or no storm Jencic must go to work, and so he put away his food and drew on his shoes.

All at once he heard a voice calling his name.

"Jencic! Jencic!" said the voice.

For a moment the big man was startled, because that sound seemed to him to come from some creature in the storm, some strange unhappy creature calling against the rain and the darkness—then he realized that it was Teena. She was calling from the lower hall.

Jencic hurried down stairs, stumbling in his eagerness and his anxiety. The girl had returned to her room, but the door was ajar, and as soon as he was close enough she opened it wide, and showed herself.

It had been three days since he had seen her. Was that why he looked so surprised, or was it because her face was red and swollen, and her eyes feverishly bright. Maybe she . . .

"Here's a letter I want mailed," said the girl quietly. "Will you mail it for me?"

"Sure," and Jencic nodded his head. "I will mail it for you. Maybe I better bring you some medicine, too. Do you want some?"

"Shut up. What do you always have to say something foolish for?"

"I just thought you was sick," he stammered. "I thought—"

"Well, I'm not, so just stop your thinking. And go on and mail that letter, or do you want *me* to go mail it, in all this rain?"

"No, no, I will mail it," said Jencic hastily, and started down the stairs.

As he paused in the lower hall, to turn up his coat collar, he heard Teena close her door, and in another instant fat little Mrs. Posilipo was standing at his elbow.

"Did I hear Teena call you?" she murmured, very softly.

"Yes."

"What did she want with you?"

"She wants me to mail her letter."

"So-o-o-o! The lady asked you to mail her letter, did she? Oh, this is funny. She writes letters to her sweetheart, and you go mail 'em for her!" The little landlady began to laugh, taking pains, however, to make as little noise as possible.

"Teena don't write to that man," retorted Jencic. "She don't like him any more."

"Oh, is that so! Well, Mr. Jencic, I suppose she is in love with you. Let me see," and before

he knew what she was doing she had snatched the letter. "Um . . . so she is not writing to him, is that your idea of it? Well, here is his name, big as you please, and the address right under it. You can see for yourself."

"Where?"

"Here. Right here. L-o-u-i-s B-e-d-i-n. Can't you read, heh?"

"I can read. You give me that letter back. You can say all you want, but I know she don't write to that man. Maybe she did one time, but she don't any more."

With this he took the letter, and without paying any further attention to her soft jibes, he went out into the storm.

There was a mail box not far away, but Jencic passed it by, and went on to Putinsky's notion store. He went in. The Jew was alone. Jencic took the letter from his pocket and said to him,

"Here is a letter. My eyes do not feel good, so maybe you would read the name and tell me who it is for."

Putinsky took the letter in his claw-like hands and turned it over and over, examining it with great care. Jencic watched him until he could stand it no longer.

"Who is it for?" he demanded.

"It is for that dog of a Louis Bedin," said Putinsky in his thin metallic voice. "He lives on Marlen Street now, according to this. No. 244.

Heh, heh, I know him. He bought perfume of me, and I was fool enough to trust him. I will remember this address and send him a bill, the cheater. I am very glad you came in with this letter. But how did you get it?"

Jencic reached out and took the letter.

"I am to mail it," said he. Then he added slowly, "And you say it is for Louis Bedin?"

"Yes, Louis Bedin. The faker, I know him. Perfume and the finest of handkerchiefs, those are the kind of things he buys, even if he hasn't a cent, and all to make a show before that girl of his."

"Girl?" said Jencic. "What girl?"

"Why, that Teena who lives in Posilipo's house. She works for Vogel, down at the bakery. Psst! she is as bad as Louis Bedin when it comes to—"

But Jencic's fingers had taken him by the throat, in such a way as to shut off his squeaking.

"Don't say bad things about Teena," said the big man, in a curiously thick tone. "If you do I will smash you good. She is my girl, and what is more she don't have nothing to do with that man any more. I am going to mail this letter, because she wants me to mail it, so she won't get wet. She is sick."

He let go of the quivering Jew and started for the door.

"Go on and mail it!" screamed Putinsky, frightened but also very angry. "Mail her letter, if you

want to. Why should I care! I wouldn't say a word about your Teena, but just the same maybe you might ask her why she is writing to Louis Bedin. Go ahead and ask her, why don't you?"



## CHAPTER XVI

### I

No doubt Putinsky thought him a worm for mailing such a letter; but it was not that, it was simply that everything had happened so suddenly. It was like an explosion in his ears, so that before he could decide on what he ought to do it was necessary to let the din ease down, and then look at matters calmly.

Therefore he mailed the letter and went on to the bakery, and while he worked he thought it all out. This took a considerable time, because the affair of himself and Teena and Louis Bedin had grown to tremendous proportions. In the beginning it had been a mere excrescence, somewhat resembling a boil on his nose; but very rapidly it had grown larger and more painful, until now it was difficult for him to see anything else, and even when he closed his eyes he was unable to put it out of mind.

Jencic thought it over all that night, and in the end he convinced himself that Teena really liked him. It is true that there was some evidence to the contrary; for instance, she had played about with another man, and at the same time she had treated Jencic rather shabbily. But was not this

the natural accompaniment of love! Jencie remembered the days when the bakery was small, and Vogel's family lived upstairs. Mrs. Vogel was a genial soul, yet sometimes she got angry with her husband, and on these occasions she would upset cakes and doughnuts and throw as much as ten dollars' worth of bread upon the floor, by way of expressing her dissatisfaction. There were times, also, when she beat little Vogel over the head, yet afterward she was the most affectionate creature in the world, and not only patted the injured member with her plump white fingers, but kissed it as well. No doubt there was some very good reason why love required both vinegar and honey, just as in the case of rare pastry.

So Jencie shrugged his shoulders at the remembrance of Teena's contrariness, and reminded himself that she liked him. She herself had said so. Of course she had denied it later on, nevertheless Jencie's original convictions were not so easily overturned as all that. His mind did not work as fast as some people's, but it compensated for this slowness in the form of an extreme tenacity once it was made up. Teena really liked him, that much was certain.

And yet there was plenty to trouble him. This letter to Louie, for example. Jencie thought and thought about that angle of the case, but it was no use—it was like one of those wire puzzles that

he had tried to do one time—simple but baffling.  
“I’ll ask her,” he finally said to himself.

## II

The next morning Jencic went home and ate his combination breakfast and dinner, then he carefully brushed his hair and went down to Teena’s room.

Rat-tat-tat!

“Who is it?”

“It’s me.”

“What d’ye want?”

“I want to talk to you.”

“Go ’way and let me alone.”

But Jencic was in no mood to be put off. A night of thinking had brought him to an impasse. No one save Teena could throw light on his problem. He knocked again, by way of getting her attention.

“Are you up?”

“Shut up.”

“Have you got your clothes on? If you ain’t got any on, you put some on, because we are going to have a talk. I will wait.”

“Wait and be damned.”

Jencic waited for five minutes, then he spoke again,

“You had time now. You are quick and it don’t take long for you to get dressed. Open the door,

so we can talk. I don't want to talk like this, somebody will hear us."

No answer.

"Open the door," observed Jencic, "or I will bust it."

"Try it, you big dummy."

"Open it up, or I will bust it, like I done the washroom door."

"Good-by. Go peddle yer papers."

Jencic took hold of the door knob. He turned it and pushed a little. But the door did not yield. It was bolted from within.

"What you tryin' to do," demanded the girl, "break in? Haven't ye got any manners, or what's wrong? I s'pose that's the way people act over in Hungary, or wherever it is you come from!"

"I am going to come in. Louie did, so—"

"That's no sign you can—let that door alone!"

"I'll show you how I let it alone," said Jencic, and put his weight against it. Rip! went the bolt, and in another instant he was inside. Teena was standing in the center of the room, the red kimono draped about herself, her hair down, and her bare feet in slippers. Jencic's sudden entrance had startled her.

But in another instant she had recovered herself. "Get out of here," she exclaimed.

He did not move, whereupon she flew at him in a rage, kicking him where she could, and hitting him in the face with her hard little fists. Jencic did

not budge, he merely stood there, as patient as if he were having his hair cut. In exchange for her blows he gave her a grin. She was so small, so frail, so spunky. Never before had a woman laid hands on him. It was an experience, and under the circumstances a wonderful experience. He felt as Vogel must have felt when Mrs. Vogel thumped him for love. Ah, sweet blows, dear precious blows! If only she would go on forever! But no, she had hurt her foot on him, and now she was drawing back, trembling and silent, until with a strangely quiet voice she said,

"Can't you see I'm not dressed?"

"Don't be scared. I won't hurt you. I just want to ask you something, about that letter."

Her eyes widened, her face grew tense,

"What letter? The one I give ye to mail?"

"Yes."

She closed the door and sat down on the bed, pointing to a chair. "Set down."

Jencic took a seat. He began to blink at her with his steady gray eyes.

She broke out impatiently, "Well, what about it? Did you mail it, or didn't you?"

"Sure, I mailed it."

"What ye got to ask me then?"

He adjusted his big frame on the chair, maneuvering like a man who wants to feel more determined than is his wont. "Well . . . I . . . well, why do you write letters to Louie Bedin?"

There! he felt better already, for having put it to her so squarely.

"So you took a look, did you? Couldn't mail a letter without snooping to see who it was for!"

"It wasn't me that looked at it," said Jencic. "It was Mrs. Posilipo. She told me who it was for."

Teena sat bolt upright, consternation in her face,

"Did she see that letter? How did that happen? Darn it, what did you let her see it for?"

Jencic lifted his hands in a gesture of helplessness,

"How could I help it? She grabbed it before I could tell what she was up to."

"I bet you're lying!" cried the girl all at once. "I bet you never mailed it at all! You opened it and kep' it!" Up she jumped, and ran her hands through his pockets.

"No," said Jencic simply. "I didn't do that. I mailed it, just like you said for me to."

It was impossible not to believe him. Even for Teena it was impossible, and so she said no more about *that*, but slumped down on the bed and began to bite her nails. She appeared to have forgotten him, so absorbing had her thoughts become.

"Why did you write him a letter?" continued Jencic.

"Are you a priest?" she retorted. "Must I tell you all my private business?"

"Do you like that fella?"



She chewed at her lip, not answering.

"Listen," said Jencic, as gently as he could, "there is something the trouble, I am sure of it. One day you are full of jokes and smiling all the time, and the next day, maybe, you are awful quiet and kind o' sick looking. I think maybe you are not feeling so good any more, but just pretending that way, so people will think you are happy when you ain't happy at all! I bet it is about Louie and me. Maybe you are not so sure which one is the man for you, eh! Is that it? Which one do you like the best, Louie or me? You should like me the best, because I am the best man."

She snorted and looked away.

"That's right," he retorted. "I licked him. He pulled a knife on me, just as you could see yourself, but I wasn't afraid. I didn't have any knife. I just had my hands, but I come for him, and he run away. That is the kind of a fella he turned out to be, don't you think? All right, let him go. Now you and me can go to the Arcade some more. We will get married, too."

"Oh Lord!"

"I got money," he went on. "I saved it out of my wages at the bakery. I don't spend very much—"

"So I've noticed!"

"—so I got quite a lot o' money saved up. It is more than five hundred dollars altogether. I will take some and buy clothes for the wedding, for you

and some for me, too, then we will buy other things and have some rooms for ourselves, like Krusack has got. Maybe we could live in the same house with him. I been thinking about that quite a bit. The windows are broke out, but they could be fixed with new ones, and it is a fine place. I will take you there and show you. I bet you will like it."

Teena had been blinking at the wall during this speech, blinking and apparently not hearing a word, but now her eyes sharpened . . . she straightened up, alert once more . . . studying the big man in her quick, shrewd way.

"Say, Romeo," she murmured, "if you think so much o' me, just give me your word you'll do something I got for you to do."

"Do what?"

"Do what I want ye to do. Tell me you'll do it, then I'll tell ye what it is."

"But—how can I say I will do it if I don't know what it is?"

She controlled herself with an effort. "It don't amount to anything. I just want ye to find Louie Bedin and have him come here to the house."

Jencic looked at her as if she were losing her wits. He could not say a word.

"I got something to talk to him about," said the girl lamely. "I wrote him a letter and told 'im to call me on the 'phone, but he didn't. That was the second letter I wrote 'im, that you mailed last night. So something must be wrong. Maybe he don't get

my letters any more. Or maybe he is afraid of you, because you made him run. You could have him arrested for pulling a knife like that, so I think that is what he is afraid of. Yes, I bet that is it, otherwise he would come to see me." She was beginning to fidget.

"Well, what do you care?" said Jencic slowly. "It is better for that fella to stay away from you, so you and me can have fun together. We don't care for him."

"You better go get him for me," she muttered. "I got to talk to 'im."

"Ho! what is that for?"

"Never mind. Something personal, something you don't know anything about. Come on, be human for once, and go tell him I got to see him right away."

"No, I won't do it."

"Well, that's gratitude!" she flashed. "After all I've done for *you*, that's a pretty way to talk. If it wasn't for me you'd ha' been out in the rain and no job even. Didn't I find you sleeping on the porch that morning? And didn't I tell you about the job Krusack had?"

"That is true enough."

"Well, then, try to show a little appreciation, and do what I want ye to."

"No, I can't do it."

She went back to biting her nails, her face working,

"Huh! you're just like all the rest of 'em, ain'tchu! All they want is their own end, then they ain't got any more use for ye. Pooh, I know why you won't go. You're afraid he'll lick ye."

"Is that so!" said Jencic heatedly. "I guess I am not scared of anybody like that. I was one time, maybe, but I ain't no more. I will fight him any time he wants to, and I don't have to get drunk to do it, either. I will go for him sober. I don't hunt for any trouble, but just the same I am not scared of him, and you don't want to say so. If him and me ever come close again, and he says any more insults to me like he done before, I'll smash him to pieces."

"Oh, dry up. I was just jollying you."

"Do you think he can lick me?"

"Naw, of course not. Don't get so excited. I know you're not afraid of him, so why can't you do me a favor and go after him, the way I want ye to?"

Jencic shifted on his chair, ill at ease and fretting under her persistence.

"Listen," he begged, "why should we talk about that fella any more? It makes me feel bad, and it makes you feel bad, too. Let us talk about something else, so we will feel better. Maybe you could play a piece on your concertina. That would be fine for both of us, huh, what do you say, Teena, will you?"

She looked at him thoughtfully,

"Would it please you for me to play?"

"Yes."

"Would it please you just a little, or would it please you a whole lot?"

"Yes."

"Then I will play for you."

### III

The girl took up her concertina and began to play, weaving a spell of soft music. Gently she manipulated her instrument back and forth, skillfully fingering the keys, weaving a spell of soft music. . . .

Jencic sank back in his chair, the heavy stolidity of his face drifting away, his eyes filling with dream, the mouth growing tender. He was like a child, this big horse of a workman.

"D'ye like it?" she whispered.

"Yes."

"Tell me how ye like it."

He lifted his hand in a vague impotent gesture,

"I can't say such things. I don't know how. I just like it, that is all. It hurts me . . . hurts me. . . ."

She went on playing, crooning her music into the merest film of an air, so low and so gentle and delicate that Jencic could not but yield to its intoxication. What marvel was this, that he should be here in this room, with Teena, and see her clothes

hanging here and there, her shoes under the bed, and other intimacies, Teena so beautiful and so alluring, playing softly on and on, and by and by speaking in a voice more lovely than the music which accompanied it,

"Ah, Jencic, Jencic, it is so hard to be unhappy when you are young, like I am. Men are so selfish. All they want is what they can get out of a girl, and then they go away and never come back. You are that way, too. You say you like me, and you'd do anything for me, but when I ask a little favor you turn around and won't do it. Just look what I do for you, though. Here I am, sick and in trouble, and I put all of it aside and play for you, because you want me to, just because you want me to. I ought to be resting, because I got to go back to the bakery to-night or lose my job, but here I am, playing for you, just to make you happy. So why won't you try to make me happy, like I am you. Tell me, Jencic, won't you?"

"What?" said Jencic huskily. It was an effort even to speak, it was like being awakened from a fabulous dream.

"Why won't you do what I want you to?" she pleaded.

"I will," he muttered. "I will do what you want."

"Will you?" and she stopped playing and sprang to her feet. "Will you really go get Louie for me?"



He gave a start. His face clouded over,

"No, I didn't mean that. It is too much. I can't do it. I will do anything else, but I can't do that."

She came forward a step, standing so close that he could feel her legs against his knees.

"Would you go if I kiss you?" she asked.

He stared at her with a dazed uncomprehending face, and when he did not reply the girl placed her hands on his shoulders and leaned toward him, her eyes glittering strangely, her hot breath coming against his cheeks. Her kimono had fallen open. He could see the white roundness of her bosom rise and fall and rise again.

"Ask me anything you want to," she whispered, "and I'll give it to ye, but you got to promise to get him and see that he comes here. D'ye want me to hand myself over to ye? Is that what ye want? All right, I'll do it, if you'll just promise to go for me."

"What d'you mean?" he gasped.

"You know what I mean," she whispered, burning her eyes into his.

Jencic experienced an insupportable shock. His brain reeled. He seemed on the point of going mad, and yet what an ineffably delicious madness it was. Teena was all at once no longer a human figure but an essence, compounded of perfume and a vast enticement, into which he felt himself melting, and her into him likewise, with fear and desire

chasing each other over his cold skin, until in some inexplicable fashion the lure faded—revulsion and a deep-rooted shame took its place.

“Will ye?” she repeated.

“No,” said Jencic, in an almost inaudible voice, “no . . . that is bad . . . when we are not married . . . I would not want such a wife.”

The girl jerked back from him, trembling with surprise and resentment. One moment to glare at him, and then she clenched her hands and burst out,

“God damn you, anyway, you big overgrown idiot, it was your fault Louie went off and left me, so the least you could do would be to go get him to come back! You let me beg you on my knees and offer to give ye myself, and still ye ain’t got decency enough to do a girl a favor! Well, I tell ye something, Mister, you *are* going to go get him, or I’ll know the reason why! You go, or I’ll get a gun and make ye wish ye had!”

“Don’t try to scare me,” said Jencic stolidly. “I don’t care for such talk. I won’t go, that’s all.”

She was still glaring at him. Her lips quivered open, as if she were about to speak, then suddenly she threw herself face downward upon the bed, and lay there.

Jencic looked at her. His brow wrinkled. He was puzzled. There was no understanding women. Look at Teena now. See her shoulders shake. Why, she was laughing! And still . . .

"Teena!" he cried, all at once. "What is the matter? What are you doing?"

"Leave me alone," she sobbed. "Go 'way, damn you. . . . Oh, my God, what shall I do, what shall I do, what shall I do!"

Jencic came and bent over her, his great hands never touching her and yet caressing her, his voice full of dismay, and supplication,

"Don't cry, don't cry! I'll do it. If you will only stop I will go for him, Teena. I don't want you to do that. Are you going to stop? I will do something bad if you don't! You got to stop crying, Teena, or I don't know what I will do. I tell you I will go get that fella for you. I will go right now. I will do anything, if you will only stop crying!"

## CHAPTER XVII

### I

NOTHING else could have done it, neither commands nor soft music nor threats nor promises of the flesh; but when it came to tears . . . well, it is terrible to see a woman cry, so that Jencic, who had been stubborn and strong, was all at once reduced to weakness at the sight.

"I will go," he said over and over again, "Stop crying, Teena, I will go."

The girl left off with her sobs and rolled over on the bed, so she could look at him and see if he meant it. Yes, he meant it, wherupon she got to her feet, adjusted her clothes, and proceeded to blow her nose with the tiniest handkerchief Jencic had ever seen. It was of such a size that it would not have covered half of his face, and as for blowing his nose on it . . . She came closer to him, her bosom still restless with emotion, her eyes bright with tears. How beautiful she was. Such soft brown eyes. And those delicate female ways she had. Teena took his fingers and placed them against her heart, her lips quivering in the most pitiful way,

"Feel how my heart's beating, Jencic. All be-

cause you were mean to me and said you wouldn't go."

Jencic drew his hand away. It was too frightening, too intimately shocking to touch her like that. Better to get away—to get out of her room.

"I'll go," he muttered. "Why you should want him to come here to talk to you I don't know, but anyhow I will go."

Teena was rapidly growing calm. Her bird-like alertness was returning. "His name is Louis Bedin," she said swiftly, "and he lives at 244 Marlen Street. It's on the other side o' town."

"Other side o' town," repeated Jencic, in a doubtful tone, "but . . . how . . ."

"It ain't far—just a little ways," and she began to explain the location of Marlen Street, and how he was to get there—only she talked so quickly that instead of clearing up Jencic's ideas on the subject she entangled them in a mass of cloud. When any one talked that way to Jencic it was as if forty wagoners were unloading flour at the same time, so that before he could dispose of one sack along came ten more on top of it. No, there was no keeping up with Teena. All he could do was to listen and nod his head when it seemed to him that she wanted him to agree. "Now," said she finally, "d'ye think ye know how to get there?"

"No."

Once Teena would have flared up at that, but now she was all patience. Instead of bursting into flame

she merely took pencil and paper and wrote everything down for him—where he was to take the car, and the place to get off, and how to go from there, until she had brought him to the residence of her lover, Mr. Louis Bedin. These instructions completed she folded the paper and put it in his hand, somewhat as a mother might put a note for the grocer into the hand of a child.

“Now,” said Teena eagerly, “you better go right away. Go on, get your hat and coat.”

Jencic was dubious about the paper she had given him, nevertheless he obeyed. Up to his room and back again with his hat and coat. Teena was waiting for him on the second landing, trying to smile. Her eyes looked feverish, it seemed to Jencic.

“Good luck,” she whispered.

He did not know what to say to this, so he wagged his head and said nothing. Slowly he went down the stairs—but at the front door he paused, as if set upon by an idea.

“What’s the matter?” she called.

Jencic turned and came back up the stairs. Teena retreated into her room, motioning for him to come in.

“What’s the matter?” she said again, “ain’t ye going?”

“S’pose he don’t want to come,” said the big man soberly, “then what must I do?”

The hint of violent fire flamed up in Teena’s



face, then suddenly she was sly and coaxing.

"What a question for my big Jencic to ask," she murmured. "Why—if he is so unpolite as that, you must tell him you will smash his face for him if he don't come! Just remember how you made him run that time, and make him come the same way, even if you have to drag him here by the neck."

"All right," Jencic grinned, and went down the stairs again, this time fairly on his way.

## II

Jencic boarded the West End street car and sat down to wait for it to carry him to where Louie Bedin lived.

The big man was troubled. Too many things had been happening lately. And look at the kind of things they were! That talk with Teena, and what she had said and done, with her bending over him the way she had, so that even now he had only to close his eyes in order to feel her breath on his face and see the twin mysteries of her bosom rising and falling before his very eyes. . . . As for what she had offered him . . .

He made himself think of something else. But the something else turned out to be Louie Bedin, which was just as disturbing as what he had been thinking about before. Louie Bedin was a cloud, sometimes close and smothering, sometimes remote

and seemingly unreal, but always he stood between Jencic and the sun, and did very well at the business of casting shadow and cool gloominess. And to think that Jencic was actually making this trip just to get that devil of a fellow to come and see Teena! It was incredible, and yet it was true. Here he was, on the street car. . . . What was Teena wanting to talk to Louie Bedin about? Perhaps . . . well, after all . . .

Big Jencic released a sigh. It occurred to him that he ought to have taken two or three good hearty drinks of whisky before he left the house. . . . But, no, that wouldn't do, because Krusack had said to him one time, "You watch out and don't tank up when it's a question of business, see? Liquor is for sociability, but it ain't no good for business." Which was very true, as Jencic himself had demonstrated the night he made Louie Bedin run. No, no, he must not touch a drop, not until this trip was over and he was back home, in his own neighborhood.

For Jencic was no longer in that section of the city which the long years had made familiar to him. He was aboard a street car, and the street car was hurtling along at a tremendous pace, grinding around corners, pausing, hurrying onward, until Jencic's peering eyes could not recognize even a single detail in all that turbulent panorama. One strange street after another rushed by. . . .

Finally he began to grow uneasy. Also, the car

was making him a bit sick at the stomach. He got to his feet and made his way down the swaying aisle to the conductor,

"Is this Marlen Street yet?"

"What street?"

"Marlen Street," said Jencic anxiously. He showed his paper.

The conductor looked at it,

"Aw, you mean *Marlen* Street. Why don't you guys learn to talk United States! Naw, set down an' give yer feet a rest. We ain't anywheres near it. I'll tell ye when. Set down."

Jencic experienced very little assurance as the result of this conference, yet he did sit down. He fell to looking out the window. . . . A strange world out there . . . so much brighter and cleaner than his own neighborhood. . . . Tall shining buildings, plots of grass, splendid automobiles, and a great many expensively dressed people going to and fro. It was like a moving picture, so real and so impossibly brilliant and rich.

Nevertheless, he did not enjoy the spectacle. It was alien to his experience, that was why. In his own neighborhood, compounded of such elements as the bakery, his lodging house, the church, and so on, Jencic was perfectly at home; but not so in this glamorous place. And it was not that he was unacquainted here, it was rather that what he saw appeared to be hostile to living and working. Here there were no laborers but only rich strangers—

and so it was just as well that the street car passed on out of such a place, and came, presently, to more sensible surroundings: modest houses, men in work clothes, smokestacks and the smells of industry, one or two comforting rubbish heaps, and not so many towers cluttering the sky.

“Marlen Street! Marlen Street!”

### III

Jencic got off the car.

He was now in the vicinity of his enemy, yet he was not excited. Louie Bedin was no longer to be feared. It was Jencic who was master, Jencic who would tell him very briefly why he had come and what the fellow was to do. Then Mr. Bedin would do it, either before or after receiving a broken nose from one of Jencic's big fists. That was the way it would be.

Marlen Street ran straight out before him, up over a rise in the earth and out of sight. A long street, flanked on either side by a solid row of tenements so alike as to be distinguishable only by number. Jencic had the number, however, and so it was simply a matter of following on and on, up over the hill and down the other side, watching the figures as he went—until at last he came to No. 244.

Jencic went up the steps and knocked. There was a bell handy, but Jencic was in the habit of

knocking when he wanted people to come to the door.

A little silence, and then footsteps. The door opened somewhat. A woman peeped out, holding to the inner knob meantime, as if she might want to close the door any minute. A frowzy woman, with sagging cheeks and water standing in her eyes. Jencic could see that it had been a long time since she had had any teeth.

"What do you want?"

"Is Louis Bedin here?"

The woman looked at him with her feeble searching eyes. She appeared to be afraid of the big stranger.

"No, he's not here."

"Where is he?"

Once more she scrutinized him. At last she seemed to be favorably disposed toward him. She opened the door and stepped back,

"Come in."

Jencic followed her inside. She took him through a hall and into a kind of front room, where there was a peculiar odor and not much light. In one corner stood a bed, with the blankets in disorder. A musty unpleasant room.

"What's your name?"

"Jencic."

"Where do you work?"

"I work at the bakery."

She unbent at that. "I thought you was a agent,

or something like that. Well, this is Louie's room right here."

Jencic looked at it.

"Louie was with me for three years," she went on. "I let him have a little room on the third floor when he first went to work at the foundry, then when he got a raise he took this room. He was a nice clean fella, but he had to go get in trouble with a girl, so he skipped."

"He got in trouble with a girl?"

"Somebody on the South Side, yeah. She tried to get 'im to marry 'er, but I guess he didn't want to. He didn't even wait to get her last letter. Here it is on the mantel, see?"

She took up the letter.

"Somebody opened it," said Jencic.

"I did that," said the woman. "I thought maybe I ought to, in case . . . Here's what she says . . . 'You're the one that is the cause of everything, Louie, so you got to stick by me and marry me, like you said you would. If you don't, I don't know what will happen to me. . . .' There's a lot more, but . . . wait a minute. . . . Here's her name at the bottom—Teena. Kind of a Eytalian name, or somethin' like that. . . ."

#### IV

Jencic could never remember how he got out of that house. His only recollection was that he



turned faint, and said something or other, and then somehow he was in the street again . . . walking and walking . . . his face clouded. . . .

A clouded face but a clear mind. Everything was as plain as day. Jencic understood. It was this way: Teena got herself in trouble with this dude of a Louie Bedin. Then Louie Bedin had run off, so he wouldn't have to marry her. That was why Teena looked so pale and worried, and had those spells of temper lately. Yes, Jencic understood how it was with her and Louie Bedin.

Curiously enough, Jencic was not angry with this dude lover of Teena's. To be sure, it was a shameful thing, and no man that was a man would do such a thing, but then Jencic had so long held the rascal in contempt that this new development only confirmed his previously low opinion of him. What can you expect of a man who works in a foundry and gets so dirty that he has to wear perfume when he dresses up! a man who wears a flower in his buttonhole, and pulls a knife on you in a fair fight, and all that! Of course it is such people that are always looking for a chance to do something they shouldn't! Afterward they disappear into the labyrinth which is the city, leaving behind them a mess of trouble.

Trouble for Jencic and trouble for Teena. A sin had been committed. And it is much worse for girls to do wrong that way than it is for men. When women are bad, it seems like there is no

good in anything. It is like bad flour—no matter what you put with it, the bread is going to be spoiled.

“Chut!” said Jencic aloud.

He spat in disgust, then suddenly he paused and looked about. Where was he? What had become of Marlen Street? How did he come to this place, this desert of strange buildings, this tangle of unfamiliar streets and people!

Jencic said to a man,

“Where is Dole Street?”

“Search me. . . . Why don’t ye ask the cop?”

Jencic went to the policeman.

“Where is Dole Street? I live on Dole Street, but I got lost. How do I go to get there?”

“It’s a long ways off,” said the officer. “D’ye want to walk, or d’ye want to ride?”

“I want to walk.”

“Well, turn at the next corner and go *that* way. Just follow along till ye come to a big bridge. Go under the bridge, then turn off to the right and you’re there. Ye can’t miss it.”

Jencic set out in accordance with these directions, turning at the corner and following along a seemingly interminable street. He must have been mixed up as to where he was. But now the officer had shown him where to go. Straight ahead, and soon he would be back to Mrs. Posilipo’s—and Teena.

The thought of Teena was beginning to stir up

anger in Jencic. Very rarely did this big man yield to such a feeling, especially if he were sober. Nevertheless, he was angry now. Also, the more he thought about it all the angrier he became. Why, she was a slut, nothing else. She had played with Jencic, pretending to like him; then when he had crept out of his shell and began to hope for better things, look at the way she had dashed him to the ground and made fun of him. Ho! she made fun of him, did she! She'd point to a store window and tell him to see what a figure he cut beside her own fine self, would she? Well, Jencic would fix her for that. Wait till he got back to the house, he would give her a good beating, just to remind her that girls should behave themselves, and then when he was through yanking and slapping her around he would bring up this matter of seeing your reflection in a store window, and maybe tell her that she who was so proud of her appearance might not cut such a fine figure after a while; but Jencic would look the same, because he behaved and didn't draw down evil upon himself. Oh, but Jencic was angry. He gritted his teeth when he thought of all that she had done, and all that it meant. Damn' little slut, he would beat her good, as soon as he got home. . . .

The sun was falling. He looked up. There was no bridge in sight. Moreover, the sun did not seem to be in the right place. It appeared to him that he had been walking for hours. And now the

light was failing. In a few moments it would be gone, and after that he would be in the middle of the dark.

All at once he said to himself,

"What if I am lost!"

Jencic had got over his fear of Louie Bedin, but as for his fear of the unknown, it still lurked in his breast, so that the minute he said to himself, "What if I am lost!" an unreasoning fright took possession of him. He began to run, clopping along like a big draft horse and panting noisily, because he was not used to it.

"Hold on there!" said a commanding voice.

He stopped. A policeman came up to him, suspicious and hard of eye.

"What you running for?"

"I want to get home," panted Jencic. "I'm lost. I'm lost."

The officer felt his pockets. No weapons.

"Where you live?"

"I live on Dole Street. I—"

"Well, you're not lost then. It's just under the bridge. Turn to the right and there you are. But don't go running in the street any more. Nobody but crooks do that, see?"

The bridge, eh! Jencic hadn't seen it, and yet there it was, looming up in the light of the setting sun, and the arch of it a kind of gateway through which he was free to pass to his own neighborhood, before the dark came down. He walked on, easier

in his mind, but still heavy hearted—because of Teena. Jencic was sick when he thought of it all. It was like a revolting dream, the kind you have when you drink too much of Putinsky's whisky on an empty stomach. He shuddered to think of arriving at his lodging house. . . .

The sound of bells fell upon his ear. He looked up. Well, he was almost home. There was the church, lifting its tapering spire and its cross against the twilight sky, its bells pealing and ringing, and ringing and calling. Then he saw Teena herself, coming from the direction of Mrs. Posilipo's, on her way to work.

Jencic halted abruptly, staring at that slight figure as it came toward him. Apparently she had not yet seen him, but in a minute more she would. Here was his chance to seize her and give her that good beating, but alas! he knew that he could not do that. Better that somebody should beat him, rather than that his great hand should touch her in anger. He could not even face her just now, not until he had had time to think out a plan. And so he ran from her, hurrying up the church steps after a worshiper and in the open door, because it was the only place he could go just then.

Once inside the door he paused, not knowing what to do. Before him stretched a long dark hall, the floor cluttered with unending rows of wooden benches, and above these benches an immensity of luminous space. All at once he felt very tired, in

need of a place to sit and rest, if only for an instant. . . . Slowly he walked down the aisle, and sat down on one of the benches.

He sat stiffly erect, hardly daring to breathe. It was so still in that skyey place that it was impossible not to yield one's self to quietude. So close to the street, and yet so still, so calm. Dark save for a faint light which came filtering down from certain colored windows on either side. Here and there a bench topped by black—maybe a human being, kneeling at prayer, silent as death. Peace and tranquillity, a kind of sanctuary, with something white at the farther end of it, white flanked with quivering candle flames.

Jencic was glad of a chance to sit down, after so many hours of walking on the hard pavements. Here he could rest—and ponder over the melancholy situation in which he had found himself. The old familiar oppressiveness began to settle upon his heart. What was to be done? An hour ago he had been running over with angry strength, now he was weak. He shifted his weight. The wooden bench was so narrow that he could scarcely sit on it . . . but in front of him there was a low stool . . . slowly he let himself down upon this stool, until he was kneeling upon it, his hands grasping the bench ahead. Then he bowed his head . . . somehow it seemed so natural that he should do that. . . .



## CHAPTER XVIII

### I

A RUSTLE made him look up. An old woman had moved up the aisle and was kneeling in front of him, two benches away. Jencic could hear her mumble. Also, the church was not so dark as it had been. Instead of being alone, it seemed that he was in company with a dozen other people scattered here and there among the wooden seats.

Hastily he got off his knees and made his way out of the church. A strange thing, his going into that place the way he did, but at any rate he was coming out with a clear head, and that was more than he had gone in with. Jencic's trouble was no longer a trouble; he had left it behind him, in the church; and now he could go off to work with his head up where it should be.

He walked as fast as he could, because it appeared to be later than he had thought. It was part of the religion of this man always to be on time, and if not on time, then ahead of time. So it would never do to be tardy this evening. Ho! there was the bakery ahead, its windows glowing with light. Everybody must be there—except Jencic.

“The devil!” said Jencic to himself, and began to run. Then he slowed down to a fast walk, re-

membering what the policeman had told him that very day. "Look out you don't run," the policeman had said. "Nobody but crooks run when they're in the street."

In a few moments he had reached the front entrance and was hurrying up the stairs to the bake-room. He came in the door, and there he paused, breathing heavily and gazing at Krusack. The head baker did not return his gaze, indeed his back was turned to Jencic, as if he were too much displeased with his tardy helper even to look at him. It was fifteen minutes past the proper time for filling the yeast cans, and here Jencic was only just coming in from the street!

A great shame came upon Jencic as he stood there on the threshold. Krusack was angry, for though his back was turned Jencic could see that he was yanking at his black mustaches, and that was something he never did unless he was very much displeased. It was an ordeal even to think of going forward and speaking to him, and yet it had to be done. Jencic must try to make peace with the master, and afterward maybe they could work fast and somehow catch up with their schedule.

"I am ready to start work," said Jencic humbly, and came forward.

Krusack wheeled about at this. Alas! there was no mistake. The head baker was angry, in fact Jencic had never seen him in such a state. Why, his mustaches were every which way, he had

chewed them so. And his eyes! they did not look human—they looked more like coals of fire gleaming from under an oven.

“Oh, you are, are you!” cried Krusack sternly. “Well, it won’t do you any good to-night, you and your wanting to go to work!”

“I didn’t mean to be late,” stammered Jencic, and when he saw that the head baker was going to speak, he hurried on, “I forgot what time it was. I had to go to the West End, so I got lost. It was later than I thought it was. But I hurried when I saw it was late and everything was lit up. I will work hard’s I can and try to make it up. Maybe I better start sifting now.”

“No,” said Krusack abruptly, “you will not start sifting, not to-night!”

Jencic was numb with despair. It was just one trouble after another lately—Teena and what she had done, and now Krusack forbidding him to work, and angry in the bargain.

“What you say?” stammered the big man. “You don’t want me to work to-night?”

“That is it exactly!” said the head baker, jerking his head savagely, “you are not going to work here to-night, and what is more, neither is anybody else!”

Jencic stared at him, so confused that he could not say a word. The head baker slapped himself on the chest and said, with profound solemnity,

“Even I myself will not work to-night!”

Still no rejoinder from Jencic, nothing but a blank stare. Well, the head baker had gone crazy—or else it was Jencic who was mad.

“There will be no bread made here to-night,” continued Krusack, speaking through his clenched teeth. Then with a dramatic flourish he turned and pointed to the wall. “Look!”

Jencic looked. There was a sheet of paper tacked to the wall, and on the paper a great deal of print, with Vogel’s name scrawled at the bottom.

“What is that?” asked the big man.

The head baker struck the notice with his knuckles. One would have said it was a person, the way he glared at it.

“What is it!” he exploded. “Why, dammit, it’s Vogel trying to gouge us, that’s what it is. That’s the kind of a sneak he is—ain’t got the guts to come up and say, ‘Here you people, I’m going to cut wages, that’s what I’m going to do!’ No, he’s too much of a jackal for that; he’s got to sneak in here while we’re gone and paste up his sign. Just like all the rest of the employers, the damn’ robbers. He thought nobody’d see it till pay day, but I got eyes. I been lookin’ for this, him an’ his ten per cent cut!”

Here he paused to glower expectantly at his helper, as if perhaps the big man might want to launch a tirade of his own. But Jencic merely blinked at him, and waited. That was his way. He had learned to wait for things to clear up. Ex-

perience had taught him that somebody was always saying or doing something which he could not understand, but if instead of himself taking some action in the matter he merely waited,—well, Jencic had discovered that in such a case the thing generally straightened out, because whoever was talking would probably go on and say some more. Thus with Krusack, already tapping him on the chest and continuing the subject,

“He’s notifying us that everybody in the place must accept a ten per cent cut in wages, do you hear! Me and the oven men, and Pete, and the girls, and you and everybody else. Imagine it! For example, you been getting nine dollars a week, and now he wants you to work for ninety cents less—that’s eight ten a week.

Jencic looked at the notice on the wall, and then he looked at the head baker,

“So that is it. Vogel don’t want us to have so much wages.”

“Exactly! Now you’ve got the idea.”

“Well,” said Jencic slowly, “why don’t we do that? If he don’t want to give us so much, let us take what he is willing to give, and go on with that.”

“What!”

“We can live on it. As for myself, I would like to have what I been getting, but if he will not give it I can do without it. Maybe we could not save so much, but then—”

"Never!" interrupted the fierce Krusack. "Live on less? I should say not! What do you think we are—peasants in the Old Country! Say, we're in America. We're citizens! In America the standard of living goes up, but it don't go down—do you understand?"

"No."

"Then what you nod your head for! Well, maybe the idea is too much for you, but anyhow you can help in the strike."

"Strike?"

"Yes, strike. Don't you know what a strike is, you big horse! A strike is a walk-out, because the boss is a crook and ain't done what he should. That's what we're going to do. We'll stop work, then he'll wish he'd minded his own business."

"Ho!" said Jencic in alarm, "do you mean we will quit work? No, we mustn't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because—why, because of the bread. We must make the bread."

"Oh, we must, eh! Who said so! Why should we give a damn what Vogel wants us to do?"

"No, not Vogel, but the people."

The head baker was puzzled,

"What are you trying to say? The people? What people? What about 'em?"

Jencic made a wide gesture with his hand,

"Well, I mean . . . if we don't make bread,



what will the people do? They won't have any bread."

"What of it!"

"Then they would suffer."

"Let 'em suffer," growled the head baker. "Then maybe they will wake up and realize what is going on in this country. Let 'em just take a look at what Vogel is doing to us, so they will get behind the union and help us. We are in the right. We got to stick up for ourselves, that is why I am going to make a strike. I will show that runt of a Vogel. You go call the others. Tell 'em to come here right away, I want to talk to them. Go on, call everybody. This is not a work night, it is a strike night."

## II

Jencic went to do his bidding. He went to the pastry room, and the cooling closets, and the wrapping stations, and then he went down to the basement and around to the horse sheds, and back through the storeroom, telling every worker that he found that they were to come to the bakeroom at once because there was trouble and Krusack must talk to them.

In a few minutes here they came, the girls and Pete the second baker, the two oven men, the stable boy, the wagon drivers and the furnace man, the janitor, the wrappers, and all the others who worked for Vogel. One by one they came into the

bakeroom, and as soon as they had gathered there Krusack stood up on the end of a barrel and began his address.

"Fellow workers," he said, "the boss has put up a notice that he is going to cut our wages ten per cent! Right there it is."

He paused to let them exclaim, and crane toward the notice, and look appropriately concerned, then he went on,

"Our union has been planning to organize all of the workers in the place, like they are in other bakeries, so you would get better wages and have a chance to be something besides wage slaves, so Vogel is trying to steal a march on us by cutting wages. He wants—"

Here the head baker came to an abrupt halt, for Vogel himself had entered the bakeroom and was pushing his way forward.

"What's this?" he demanded. "What is the meaning of such actions? Why is it you are not working?"

Krusack leaped down from his barrel, so quickly that the little boss hastily stepped back. The head baker folded his arms and stood there scowling, until it seemed that the terrible fellow was on the point of devouring his employer.

"You want to know why we are not working," he said roughly. "So I will ask you a question. Why do you put up such signs as this?" and he rapped the notice with the tips of his fingers.

"Because I have to," replied Vogel. "I'm not making any money any more, so—"

"Not making any money! Then how is it you go riding around in a big fine automobile, and your wife has a fur coat and such things, all of it costing God knows how many thousands of dollars! My wife ain't got a fur coat, and I guess she is as good as your wife. Yes, how does it come that you have such things if you don't make any money?"

Vogel had grown very red in the face. His eyeglasses trembled on his nose. "That's none of your business," he retorted.

"Well, we'll show you!" cried Krusack, and shook his fist in the little man's face. "This is a free country, you plutocrat. Everybody is equal, so don't come any tricks on us. You are trying to make wage slaves out of us, and put chains on us like it used to be in old times, but you can't do it, so better not try, you—you—"

He was so overcome with rage that he could not finish his sentence, yet he did manage to jerk down the offending notice and tear it into bits, and then throw the bits in Vogel's face.

"That's enough," said the little boss coldly. "Now you get to work or I will fire you."

"What!" cried the head baker, finding his voice again, "you will *fire* me! Fire *me*! Say, you're crazy, that's what's the matter with you. We're going to strike on you, and right now, too."

"Don't you people do it," exclaimed Vogel,

turning round to them. "The union cares nothing for you, and neither does Krusack. You will just be out of a job, and—"

He said no more, for something had seized him by the neck and the seat of the trousers and was hustling him toward the storeroom door. It was Krusack.

"You be quiet," advised the head baker, while they were still en route. "We are going to talk things over, and you got no business sticking your nose in."

With this he put the little man through the door and closed it. Then he called out, "Come here, Jencic. You're strong. Hold this door till we get through."

Jencic came and put his weight against the door. He could hear the boss pushing and complaining on the other side, but he did not mind. It was Krusack, not the redhead, that he cared about, and Krusack had said to do this thing. That was enough for Jencic.

"We got to strike!" cried the head baker, mounting his barrel again. "This runt of a Vogel is nothing but a parasite. In other words he is a bug what sucks blood out of the working class, just because he thinks he can do it. It is his nature. I will tell you something. In America his name means 'bird' and the kind of a bird he is is a buzzard, because he is preying on us!"

Laughter!

"The way to keep good wages," continued the orator, "is to strike. Then Vogel can't take the bread out of our mouth. Look at me. My wife is going to have another kid pretty soon, and here Vogel is trying to starve us! You people that got families know what that means. And if you ain't got families yet you better stop and think what a cut in your wages will do. It will make it so you can't ever support a family decent, that is what it will do. It is only by striking and keeping wages good that you can support a family these days, the way things are, and everything so high."

Jencic looked over at Teena. She was standing well up toward the front of Krusack's listeners, giggling and whispering to the two other girls from the pastry room. So . . . well . . . he was beginning to understand the indignation of the head baker. H'm . . . if wages were cut then men with families could not buy so much for them. Before very long he himself would be a family man; there would be Teena and the little one to care for . . . and on that account he must be sure to do what he could for good wages. Thinking in this fashion Jencic hardened his heart against the fretful little man on the other side of the door, and gave his most earnest attention to the words of the head baker.

"Everybody that don't want his wages cut hold up their hand," commanded Krusack.

The hands went up.

"Fine!" exclaimed the head baker. "That's the

stuff. Now everybody hold up their hand that's going to strike for the same wages we been getting."

Again there was a show of hands. It was unanimous, except for Pete the second baker.

"Hold up your hand."

No response. The surly one merely stood there, chewing gum, and sullenly eyeing the head baker. Krusack came up to him,

"Ain't you going to strike with the rest of us?"

"No, I'm not. I don't stand for no union bossing me."

Krusack gave him a terrible look, a devastating killing look,

"So that is the way you feel about it! You think you can buck the union, do you! Maybe you think if I strike you can be head baker in my place!"

"Why not?"

"You won't strike, then?" asked Krusack softly.

"No, I won't."

The head baker turned back to the crowd,

"Well, everybody but Pete here is willing to strike, so let him stay and take his ten per cent cut if he wants to. He'll wish he hadn't, soon enough. Now let us go home. There will be no bread made here to-night, even if Pete does stay. It takes more than one man to make this place go. All of you go home now, but be sure to come back to-morrow night. Vogel will soon have enough of it, because he will lose so much profit, and he will be glad to



give in. Let's go now, and remember what the strike is for. It is for good wages, so we can live decent."

## III

Jencic drifted out with the others, and presently set out for home.

He walked slowly, because it was the first strike in which he had ever taken part, and naturally he was upset, and not a little confused. To be sure, he trusted in Krusack and would do as the head baker had said, nevertheless there was a great deal to think about—whether he would get paid for to-night—Vogel's helpless rage—and what would happen the next night. . . .

Absently pondering and absently walking he passed up the street, and came to Mrs. Posilipo's. He went up the porch steps and was about to open the door when he was startled by some one calling his name in a low tone. It was Teena, standing very still and dark in the shadows.

"Did you see 'im?" she whispered.

"See who?"

"Say, what's the matter with you, didn't you go see him?"

"Oh!" said Jencic. It all came back to him again, Louie Bedin and Teena and their deep trouble. The excitement of the strike had pushed itself into the foreground of Jencic's mind, but only for a little while. "Oh," he repeated, and added, slowly

and heavily, "yes, I went . . . but I didn't see him."

"Why not?"

"He was gone. He went away."

"Where to?" she asked tensely. "Damn it, speak up. Don't be so dumb!"

Then Jencic told her as best he could, how he had gone to Marlen Street and the man was gone, and how the landlady said he had left town, only he did not mention the letter she had read to him. He simply said that Louie Bedin was gone away for good.

"Why didn't ye tell me soon's ye come back?" she said, very quietly.

"Because it was late when I got back. Then there was the trouble at the bakery, as you know for yourself."

All at once the girl drew in a sharp breath and seized the lapel of his coat. "Are you lying to me?" she begged. "Tell me the truth, now. Are ye lying about him leavin' town?"

He shook his head,

"It is no lie, it is the truth."

The girl wilted.

"No," she muttered, "you wouldn't lie . . . no . . . no. . . ."

Jencic gazed at her with pity in his eyes. She seemed so frail, so much like a worn child, and when he thought of all the trouble that was rearing up in front of her he could not but soften. His heart

was rapidly absorbing all the disgust and repulsion of knowing what she had done. Yes, he would marry her, and furthermore he would never revile her for what she had been with Louie Bedin. Thus he had decided while he sat in the church, and thus would he do: accept her, burden and blemish and all, and take care of her.

He put out his hand to take hers. But she wrenched away.

"Teena," he said gently, "wait a minute. I got something to tell you."

"You've told me enough," she muttered, then before he could stop her she had gone in the door and was slamming it in his face.

## CHAPTER XIX

### I

HE did not see her again until the following evening.

Krusack had said to them all, "Come to-morrow evening, the same as to go to work," and accordingly Jencic appeared. This strike business was still some distance beyond his understanding, yet he had faith in his great friend. The head baker knew what he was about. It was for Jencic to follow, not hold back. And so there he was, shambling down the street in the twilight, to Vogel's bakery.

The place was all lit up, just as if things were going on as usual. But all of the regular employees of the bakery were out in front, standing about in the street. In addition Jencic saw a great many strangers there—men and boys and a sprinkling of women. Off to one side, it appeared, there was considerable excitement, with pushing and craning, to say nothing of curse words. Jencic could not make out what it was, so he said to a bystander,

"What's going on? What they doing?"

"Aw, it's them scabs. Vogel sneaked 'em in the back way, to help Pete, the damn' devil."

He said this as feelingly as if he himself were one of the strikers, although Jencic had never seen him before. This and these other newcomers, these interested strangers—who were they? What was it all about? The big man was perplexed. He began to gaze about, looking for Krusack. . . . Ah, there he was, striding back and forth with his head on his breast, pulling at his black mustaches, like a general. Great schemes were building in that head of Krusack's—nevertheless he had time for Jencic.

“Why,” he explained, “it is just as I told you. All these people are members of the union. Most of them work the day shift at the General Baking Company. I sent out a call and they come to help us, that is all. Is that the clock striking? Yes, it is. Well, it is time I said something to them. I am like a doctor, I give my patients a dose of words every hour, so’s to keep the right idea in front of them. You shall hear how it is.”

So saying the head baker made his way to the bakery steps. He mounted them, and began to call for silence, then as the crowd quieted down to attention he flung out his arm, embracing them all in one grand gesture,

“Comrades, just a word at this time. Do not be discouraged if a few scabs get sneaked in. We shall soon attend to whatever they make in the way of bread. Even if—”

Shouts arose,

"You bet!"

"That's right!"

"Bravo for Krusack!"

The head baker was fanning his arms for silence.

"Just be firm," he shouted. "Solidarity is what we want, so I am asking you people to remember that it don't make any difference if some of you are Austrians, and others Irish, or Slovaks, or maybe Lithuanians, or whatever you are. I tell you the old nationalities are dying out in America, and new ones are gettin' developed. The new nationalities are according to jobs. Some of these days nobody will ever say a man is a Swiss or a Slav or anything like that; they will say he is a plumber or a baker or a machinist, and what he does for a living will be his nationality and his destiny! So you fellas just forget where you was born, and everything you got at the breast, and remember we are brothers here, because the job of baking bread is what connects us! Stand together!"

He stopped amid tremendous applause—shouts, yells, gestures of approval. Jencic watched him shaking hands with this one and that. It was a fine glowing thing to find Krusack so admired by everybody, even though he himself could not understand this talk of strangers who must be brothers—then he caught sight of Teena in the crowd—whereupon the strange words of the head baker troubled him no more—it was Teena who was troubling him now.



The girl was talking to somebody, and apparently having a very good time at it. Jencic watched. He did not know the man that Teena was enjoying. It was some stranger, nevertheless she was chatting and laughing as if she had known him all her days. So . . . she could act that way with a chance acquaintance, after what she must have on her mind! Jencic was so surprised that he just stood there gawking at her.

"Wouldn't that Teena give ye a pain?"

Jencic turned round. It was one of the wagoners that worked for Vogel, a short stocky man that Jencic had known for years. He was chuckling at Teena and her fellow, and when Jencic wanted to know what he meant, he said,

"Can't ye see? She's tryin' to hook that fella. Just picked up with 'im about ten minutes ago. Must be a damn' fool if he don't know what *she's* after."

"After! What is she after, you think?"

"Why, she's after somebody to marry 'er, that's what she's after."

"Ho! but . . . no, that's not so."

"O' course it's so. Didn't she try it on me? Only I wasn't fool enough to fall for 'er."

"No," said Jencic stoutly. "How could that be? A girl like Teena don't have to look for husbands."

"Guess she does, the way she is now."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean she's in trouble, so now she's trying

to get some poor fish to marry 'er, before it's too late. The dirty—"

Jencic seized him by the neck and shook him.

"That ain't so," he growled. "You tell lies, so I better learn you not to do it any more."

The idle strikers began to press up, crying, "It's a fight! it's a fight," but before it actually got to that stage Krusack was there, and holding them apart.

"Let up," said he, very sternly. "Fight some other time. Everybody is watching us to see what we do, so just remember it is no small matter—it is a big matter. The whole world is got its eye on us, just to see what kind o' fellas you are, so behave yourself!"

"Krusack!" cried a voice. "Where is Krusack? Come on, they are trying to sneak their bread out. Where are you, Krusack?"

"Here I am!" he roared back. "I'm on my way. Jencic, you come with me. You others, too. Some watch the front door, the rest make for the loading platform. Come on, Jencic. You can use your strength now, and for a good purpose, too, unless it is a false alarm. Hurry up, you big horse!"

## II

It was no false alarm. Vogel was actually trying to get out a wagonload of bread. The great Krusack had warned him, but it seemed that the

little redhead was bound and determined to do what he could, and so he had got together a few human odds and ends and set them to work under that miserable creature, Pete. Now their first batch of bread was baked, and cooled, and wrapped, and loaded into a wagon down at the shipping platform. Everything was ready for the dash.

But before that dash could be consummated, in swept Krusack and his warriors, a riotous gang of strikers and sympathizers, armed with whatever weapons they had been able to snatch up on their way to the battlefield. Krusack alone possessed no weapon. He had only a directing finger and a sharp commanding voice. That was enough, however.

“Swing back the door!” he shouted. “It goes on rollers. That’s it. Now, come on. Grab the horse. Hold ’im, and if that driver even so much as squeaks, just haul him off the seat and give him a booting.”

In they rushed pell-mell, among them Jencie himself, armed with an enormous stick he had picked up at the direction of his leader. Whatever he was going to do with it he did not know, for however formidable he may have appeared he was good natured enough. The only reason he rushed up to the bread wagon was that Krusack had issued orders to that effect. Vogel was screaming from somewhere, but somebody yelled for him.

to shut up, and after that Jencic did not hear him any more.

"Don't hurt the horse!" commanded Krusack. "I am acquainted with him. He is a good horse, and don't mean no harm."

The beast was snorting with fear, and the driver trembling on his seat, not knowing what to do. But no matter—the crowd knew what to do. They surrounded the wagon, they climbed up over it like monkeys, and then like monkeys they began to toss out the bread, so that their companions could trample it under foot. Krusack got hold of a loaf and opened it with his hands, so as to smell the inside of it.

"What a loaf!" he bellowed. "It is awful. My youngest kid could make a better loaf than that. It is because them fellas in there are scabs, that is why. Well, don't save it. Destroy it every bit. We got to teach Vogel a good lesson."

"That's right! That's what we'll do!" and the strikers attacked the bread with renewed energy, kicking it and hurling it about and having a very good time, indeed. Only Jencic could not give his heart to this business, this destruction. Ho! it was a shocking thing to do, actually to take a nice fresh loaf of bread and trample it into the dirt and ruin it altogether. It was madness, that was all, so that the best he could do he had to say to a man near him,

"Don't do any more."

“Why not!” and the fellow gave him a savage glance. “Who in hell are you, anyhow! Are you a striker?”

“Yes.”

“Then shut up and git busy!” and the man kicked a loaf of bread into the air, as if it had been a football.

### III

Finally the horrid work was finished. The alley had been strewn with broken bread, the horse unhitched and put back in his stall, and the wagon relieved of its wheels—just to make sure that it would not help the traitorous scabs again, very soon. Suddenly Vogel called out from behind the bakeroom door,

“I am going to call the police. I will have you all arrested for this.”

“That will be the worst thing you ever done!” Krusack shouted back. But he said to his crew, “Just the same we are on his property, so we better get out of here and go back to the street; that belongs to everybody.”

Vogel was not to be seen, but no sooner had the strikers put down their clubs and brickbats and gone back to the street in front of the bakery than up went his office window, and out came his head.

Jeers and catcalls.

"Watch me hit 'im with this rock," said somebody, but Krusack would not hear of it.

"Be quiet," he ordered. "No violence, or maybe we'll have trouble. Give him a chance to talk. I think he's got something to say for himself."

"Everybody be still!" screamed Vogel. "I want to say something!"

Quiet.

"What are you people striking for?" demanded Vogel, in a loud voice. "I don't understand it, I don't understand it."

"Don't ye!" returned Krusack. "Well, if you don't understand that you'll never understand anything. And what is more, if you don't have anything more sensible to say than that we won't listen."

Laughter and a miscellaneous din arose, Vogel signaling for silence. When he could make himself heard he spoke again,

"You fellas broke into my place and destroyed a lot of bread just now, and for that I could have you arrested. I haven't done it yet, because I want to be friends with you, if I can. I want to try to come to an agreement with you. If I can't, then I will telephone the police to come."

"Just you try it!"

"Dogs bark and the wind carries it away!"

"No threats!"

"You'll find out it ain't a threat!" cried Vogel. "I'm just warning you. And if I can't make bread



with non-union help I will have to close up my place. I will have boards nailed against the windows, and the fires put out, and everything that is perishable will be sold, then there will be no work for any of you, whether you want to come back to your job or not."

Jencic was aghast at this announcement, yet none of the other strikers seemed to be worrying, indeed they were grinning and winking at each other.

"Bluff talk!" shouted Krusack, and his followers applauded.

"I will show you," retorted the little redhead. "You act like this was your bakery, but just the same I am the one that is the owner."

"All wealth is produced by the workers!"

"It is my bakery, and now you people are trying to ruin me. If I should give you what I been paying before I would lose money—"

"Boo!"

"Yes, you would!"

"It's the truth!" persisted Vogel. "You people don't know. Because you are ignorant. As for what flour costs, and lard and sugar and the price of coal and all that, you don't know and you don't care. But just the same you better remember you are nothing but workmen and I am the one who is good to you because I give you a job. I am the brains in this business, and you just help me."

Krusack turned purple.

"Let him have it," he said to the man with the rock, "the damn' plutocrat, to tell such lies."

"Hold on there!" screamed Vogel. "Don't you throw that at me! Now you people listen to me, just a minute. I want you to understand I am good-hearted. I don't like to see you out of work. Of course I am losing money, but anyhow I will be good to your families and take you back and give you your jobs again."

A shout of surprise and pleasure. Hurrah for Vogel, he's all right! But Krusack was not rejoicing just yet. He made them keep still, so he could say to Vogel,

"Yes, but what wages will we get?"

"Oh—well—you will get good wages, every one according to the notice. It is all I can afford. Everything is so high, and besides—"

"And besides you are a crook! You know damn' well we won't go back to work for starvation wages—not if your bakery caves in from old age, so that is the end of that."

"Well, at the old wages, then," said Vogel angrily. "You are ruining me, just because you know I got to keep things from spoiling. But I will give you the old wages, don't be afraid."

"We ain't afraid," returned Krusack, with a grim face. "Here is another thing: you got to fire them scabs before we come back."

"All right, all right, I'll tell them to go. Now

come on, all of you that belong here. We must get out the bread."

"And I mean Pete, too," declared the head baker.

"Pete? He's not a scab. Come on, all of you, hurry up and come in and start work. It is late."

"Scab! he's worse than a scab," cried Krusack, "turning against us like that, and tryin' to take the bread out of our mouth. Don't argue about it, either. You fire him or we don't come back, that's all there is to that, eh, comrades?"

"Yes, that's right!"

"Pete's a scab, that's sure."

"All right," muttered Vogel, "he shall go."

"Good," said Krusack, smiling broadly. He turned to the crowd, "Well, my friends, it is all over, for now, anyhow. Much obliged for your help, you ones from the Baking Company. I will thank you at the next union meeting. Now you others, that belong here, come on in and get busy, same as before. Hey there, Alex, don't go away. You said you want a job, so if you do, come on with me. All right, everybody inside," and he waved them toward the door of Vogel's Modern Bakery.

#### IV

Krusack stalked into the bakeroom like a victorious general, Jencic behind him—and behind Jencic the young fellow that the head baker had

called in from the street. Krusack had told him to come along.

"All right, Alex," said the head baker, "peel off your coat. You'll find an apron over there. From now on you are my helper."

It was hard for Jencic to believe that he had heard this aright. Formerly he himself had been Krusack's helper. Was it true that the head baker was giving his job to this stranger, this fellow by the name of Alex!

"As for somebody else," continued Krusack, pretending to examine the ceiling, "they will see if the union is worth sticking to or not. Pete did not know enough for that, so instead of going up he goes down. That is why Jencic is second baker in his place."

"Huh?" said Jencic. "Who do you mean, me?"

Krusack wagged a forefinger before his face,

"No, not me, but Jencic. Well, is your name Jencic, or isn't it?"

"Yes," said Jencic, with the feeble beginnings of a smile.

"Very well, then get busy. I have shown you how, and besides I will keep an eye on you, till you get used to it. Forward!"

And so they fell to work, Jencic trembling with confusion for the first hour or so, but afterward settling down to his tasks, and to his thoughts. "A baker, a baker, a real baker!" he kept repeating to himself. No longer even an assistant, but actu-

ally on a level with Krusack himself! Mixing dough! folding it down! scaling it off! tucking it into the pans! and bearing the responsibility of it all upon his own shoulders. Ah, wait till Teena should hear of this!

"Later on," he said in his heart, "I will take in the bread to the pastry room to be wrapped, then I will have a chance to let her know how it is. Ho! but she will open her eyes when she sees I am the second baker!"

But when the loaves were out of the oven and on the racks Krusack said to him,

"Now that you are second baker you can't waste your time pushing bread around, so Alex will take it in. All right, go ahead, Alex, take all these racks into the pastry room, so it can cool and the girls can wrap it."

Jencic filled with chagrin. He watched with envy in his eyes, and for a long time after this fellow Alex had taken in the last rack of bread it chanced that Jencic kept looking that way, not so steadily as to be noticed, of course, but closely for all that.

Alex did not come back into the bakeroom. He must be still in there with the girls, Teena and the other two.

"Here you are a baker!" cried the jovial Krusack. "Well, I am glad for you, because it means a better job and more money."

Jencic nodded, but said nothing.

"Dammit, but you're a queer one!" exclaimed the head baker. "You get promoted and you're entitled to more money, but you don't ask what your wages will be!"

"What will it be?" asked Jencic obediently.

"Well, that's hard to say . . . hard to say. Of course you can't expect to get as much as a master baker, like myself, because you are not quite clever enough yet, and then you don't belong to the union yet. But I will see that you join, and little by little you will improve, so—suppose we begin with maybe \$15.00 a week. I think I can ram that down Vogel's throat. Don't do to be too hard on him. It's punishment enough to be born a German, but anyhow, say \$15.00, and then a little later—what's the matter? What makes you gawk at the pastry door like that?"

"Alex, he took the bread in," stammered Jencic, "but he ain't come out yet."

"That so? Go tell him to hurry up."

Jencic went to the door of the pastry room. He peeped in. The girls were laughing and chatting, and there was Alex, flirting with Teena . . . and she with him. . . .



## CHAPTER XX

### I

ANOTHER Saturday night.

Jencic had been having very poor luck with Teena. Sometimes she would not even talk to him. Now and then he managed to exchange a few words with her, but on the other hand he failed to bring her to the subject which he felt they ought to discuss.

To make matters worse, she had embarked upon a series of flirtations with other men, and was conducting herself in a way which Jencic found scandalous and heart-wrenching.

Yet he clung to his straw. The idea of marrying Teena had dug into his head, and there it remained in spite of everything. No amount of mistreatment could altogether discomfit him.

One time he said to her,

“What makes you talk so rough to me?”

She answered back, very sharply, that she would talk the way she wanted to, and if he didn't like it he could do the next best thing.

A great many men would have taken offense at this, but not Jencic. True, he did not like such talk, but . . . well, Teena had troubles enough to

sharpen her tongue for her, and so she couldn't really be blamed.

That was the way Jencic was feeling about it on this particular Saturday night. It was a fine young evening in April, and although the sun had been down some little while, the sky was still full of soft color. A not unpleasantly cool evening, with clear air and odors hinting at spring. One of those nights when people come out of their houses to enjoy the out-of-doors, perhaps by promenading, or maybe by sitting on their porches, as Jencic was doing.

He was trying to enjoy the fine evening, but more than that he was waiting for Teena. She was upstairs. He did not know her plans, yet he was certain that after a while she would be coming out. The night would draw her out, as a street lamp draws the moth.

Footsteps. . . . He got to his feet, prepared for another attempt.

Out came Teena, dressed in her best. Ah, she was wonderful to look at . . . wonderful. There was none like her, not even in that rich and mythical district through which the street car had taken him the time he went to find Louie Bedin. He had seen fabulous ladies that day, but they could not come up to Teena. They were too pale, too thin,—too wizzled up, as Krusack would say. Teena was not that way. She throbbed with life, pushing and running headlong into life, just like a young brook

in springtime, Teena with her black curly hair and her brown eyes, her red lips and the even teeth flashing between them, and above all the mystery and the glory of her young bosom,—no, there was none like Teena. A jewel, that's what she was, a budding gem, such as is April among the months of the year. Just look at her mincing out the door and across the porch!

"Wait a minute," said Jencic, and half put out his hand.

"Now what? You're gettin' as bad as a bill collector."

"Let us go to the Arcade," he went on rapidly. Experience with Teena was teaching him to speak promptly.

"Arcade! Say, I thought I told you not to mention that place to me again."

"We could go to a restaurant and eat something. We will have eggs and a piece of bacon."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't want to pay for it!"

"Ho! but that's not so. I will pay."

"Honest! And then I s'pose we'd have to go walking, the air is so nice."

"Sure," said Jencic eagerly. "It is fine to-night out. We could go for a walk."

"Dummy! Think I'd go walking with you!"

"Why not? We went together one time, so we could go again. Don't make fun. Why don't you be nice, like you was before? Then we will get married."

Without a word she went down the steps and away into the street.

## II

Jencic did not follow. Best to let her go, for a while anyway. The creature was beside herself with shame; that was why she acted so. Later on it would be different, but as for now . . .

He watched her vanish around the corner, and when he was sure that she could never accuse him of following her he himself went out into the street. A soft fine evening, but not for Jencic. A somber dulling mood had settled upon him. This was the night he was supposed to go to union meeting, only he could not seem to care whether he went or not. He had joined the union in accordance with Kru-sack's command, and no doubt it was a good thing . . . at the same time his thoughts were all for Teena, and so he drifted. . . . The shop windows appeared suddenly to have filled with all sorts of marvels: images, and colored eggs, and great white flowers of some kind. Jencic gawked at them and wandered on, feeling very wretched.

Time brought him along by a theater, but he passed on without stopping. Because he had never been able to get much satisfaction out of these moving pictures. They flickered and jumped so. People dashed this way and that way and disguised themselves with a change of hats or coats,

until the devil himself could not tell who was who. Besides, there were the words that came flashing on the screen every so often, long strings of tremulous letters which Jencic only just began to decipher when they flashed off again. Others might laugh at those words, but as for Jencic they were mostly a puzzle and a growing confusion. To the Evil One with moving pictures. In company with Teena it would be tolerable, but alone . . .

Then he decided to go to the union meeting, after all. It was too lonely walking around the streets and seeing other couples making love as they sauntered along, and Jencic with only a mocking ghost at his side. Better to go to the meeting; there would be talking and that would keep him from thinking. Ah, this thinking that Krusack had warned him against in the beginning. If only he had kept away from it, and had peace as a consequence. Too bad he hadn't, too bad that little by little the world of thinking had pushed into his life, until here he was with a skull full of thoughts all tumbling and jostling about, and none of them doing very much toward making him happy.

Still brooding in this fashion he reached the building where the union held its meetings. He went into the hall and sat down.

The place was full of men talking and smoking, and that was a diversion. After a while a man made them all sit down and listen to him. It was not Krusack. The head baker was himself sitting

down, across the hall from Jencic. Odd that Krusack was not on the platform with the little wooden hammer, running things. But that great man had a good deal to say before the meeting was out, nevertheless; and when it was all over he talked still more, using Jencic for his audience, as they walked home together. Jencic nodded now and then; it was a comfort to be with Krusack, even though the head baker used such big words, and spoke of things that Jencic was rather in doubt about.

"Well," said Krusack, as they strode along, "what did you think of the idea?"

"What was that?"

"Why, the proposal we was discussing, about the union demanding mixing machines in all small bakeries, such as ours. They got 'em in all the big places, so now some of the union wants them in all. If that was so we would not mix by hand any more, but just push some buttons and let the machinery do it. How would you like that?"

"I dunno. . . . What do you think?"

"Oh I voted against it," said Krusack strongly. "I am not so weak that I got to have a machine to mix dough for me, even if Vogel wants it. The dough is cold and don't work so good when it is mixed by iron arms. The arms of the baker are best for the dough; it gets warmth or life or something while he is working it with his hand, I know it for a fact."



"That's the way I think, too," and Jencic nodded his head.

"Here, wait a minute! We got to look at this."

They paused in front of a photographer's shop. There was a glass case, and in it a great number of pictures, some of them of infants, some of pale young girls in veils and white dresses, and some of couples who must just be married, by the look of them.

"Purty soon my new kid will be christened," said Krusack, "then I will get his picture taken. Maybe it will be here, if the price is right. Well, is this *your* picture, or what!"

Jencic came closer, staring. It was a photograph of a young couple, a great hulk of a man and a solemn woman, stiff and splendid in their wedding clothes.

Krusack burst into a roar of laughter,

"I am just joking, but just the same it won't be so long before you are like that, having your picture taken with your wife. Haw haw haw haw haw!"

They walked on, Jencic silent and moody, Krusack spilling over with good spirits.

"Yes," he went on, "why not! Here you are a baker, and purty soon we are going to strike for more wages."

"What! Strike again?"

"Sure! But don't say anything yet. The way to do is not to bark till you are ready to bite. But

don't worry, you will get all the bigger wages for it. Even right now, though, you could support a family with what you get."

No answer.

"How is it with you, anyway? Wasn't there a girl you had on the string? The one the Turk tried to take away from you."

"Yes."

"What was the end of it?" asked the head baker warmly. "I been so busy with the strike and all, I forget to ask you. Did the Turk come back for some more pokes in the snout, or what?"

"No, he didn't come back any more."

"That's good. You beat *him*, and he beat *it*, as the American language would go. Now you have got a clear field, eh! I bet before long you will have it settled, and little ones on the way, one after the other, the same as with me."

Silence from Jencic.

"Ah, the little ones," murmured the head baker, his violent eyes filling with tender light, "they are the ones that count—you bet. A woman is a doubtful blessing now and then, but as for the little ones, they are always a comfort. Whenever I am cold I can feel the sun on my face, just by remembering them. Every night when I am working at the bakery I keep thinking to myself, 'When it is morning again, I will see them, even though they are not waked up yet.' They are like birds in the nest, when they sleep . . . like birds in the nest. There

is nothing like it, Jencic, not even a drink of whisky, because the fine feelings of whisky will wear off, but the children do not wear off. You take my new one there, he is just two weeks old, and—”

“What, a new one!”

“Sure! Where the hell have you been when I was talking about him! He is the one who has got to be christened. Two weeks and one day, that is the age of him. Ah, you wait till you get one like him, then you will not be so blue any more, the way you are sometimes. Well, what do you say! Will you find a wife for yourself, or shall I pick one out for you!”

Jencic tried to grin.

“Maybe when you are married,” continued the head baker, “you could rent the lower part of my house. If the windows was put in again it would be a good place. Then the women would be company for each other, especially nights when we are working. Dammit, that is a good idea of mine. But I got to get home. I will see you to-morrow night, and don’t forget what I said.”

### III

There was no danger that Jencic would forget. Everything that Krusack had said concerning a wife and family and little ones, every word of it had imprinted itself upon Jencic’s brain.

He kept thinking about it all the way home, especially about the little ones. . . . Three little faces . . . on a rainy day . . . peeping out from behind a stove. . . . It was a miracle how such things come to be. You get married, and all at once there is a little flower face about the house. Krusack had four of them now.

Bye and bye he reached his lodging house. But he did not go in. It seemed to him that the air inside would choke him, and besides he was afraid that Teena might have somebody in her room, and he did not want to see that. Jencic was not afraid, he was sick at heart. Where was that new spunk of his! Gone away, because he had perceived that the situation in which he now found himself was not to be solved by fighting with fists.

Instead of going up to his room he stayed on the porch, slumped in his chair. The air was cool, the night still. It was late, and there were few passers-by. A peaceful night. Jencic brooding in the shadows. It was all very puzzling, the way his life had changed in the past few months. . . .

Very puzzling. . . . Seemed like he was never satisfied any more. Once he had been nothing but a laborer, a carrier of burdens, puffing and sweating and thankfully accepting his six dollars every Saturday. He did not know any girls, he did not want to know any, he did not even think of such people. Jencic had been content with his work, content with his frugal meals and his bare little

room, content with the monotonous march of the days and weeks.

Then came the beginnings of change. The machine threw him out of work. A plunge into despair, but afterward a better job, and in time a still better one. Nevertheless he was not as happy as he had been before. Because of Teena and the way she had tripped into his life. After that it had been trouble upon trouble, until not even the post of second baker could scatter his gloom. Without Teena it would do no good for Jencic to become ten thousand bakers all at the same time . . . without Teena and without little ones to stand behind the stove and peep out at you. . . .

Voices . . . footsteps. . . . A girl and a fellow coming down the street. It was Teena, bringing somebody with her.

Jencic hastily got up and took a seat on the farther side of the porch, nearest the wall of the house, and in the deepest shadow. He wouldn't say anything, or let on, but just let Teena take her beau inside.

The girl tried to do that very thing—take her beau inside, only he would not come. He was a tall thin youth, and ill at ease when the girl coaxed him to come up to her room, that much was plain to Jencic.

"Come on up for a minute, anyway," she wheedled.

"Naw," said the young fellow at last, "I can't,"

and in another moment he had forced a good-night out of her and was walking off down the street.

Teena watched him out of sight. . . . Slowly and heavily she turned away. It seemed to Jencic that she was going to fall, she was so weak. A great sigh came out of her as she stood there. Jencic was not more than two or three paces from her. Then all at once she came still closer and sat down in a chair, her head on her breast. She did not see Jencic.

There they sat, silent among the shadows, the girl troubled and the man troubled.

#### IV

Finally he spoke,  
"Teena."

The girl jerked out of her chair.

"Who's that? Oh . . . it's you, is it. What're ye up to now?" She sank back, sour and dull.

"I want to talk to ye," said Jencic.

"Well, *I* don't want to talk to *you*, so shut up."

"Listen, Teena," he went on earnestly, "I would not make you feel bad if I could help it, but you got to look at things in the face. That is the only way to do it."

"What're ye talking about?"

"You know. About Louie and all. Everybody knows it, so . . . didn't he get you into trouble and then go away? I don't like to say such things,



but I got to. Maybe it ain't so bad as you think, though. It is a fine thing to have a little one—"

"Shut up, shut up."

"Well, I bet you will be glad when you got a baby of your own, like everybody else."

"Baby?" she whispered hoarsely. "You're crazy. I ain't going to have a baby. I won't stand for it. I'll do something to stop it."

"Ho! what's that you say?"

"You heard me," she muttered, rapidly clasping and unclasping her hands.

"Don't you talk like that, Teena."

"Oh, let up. I tell ye I'll kill myself before I . . . I . . ."

"Hush," said Jencie sternly. "That would be a sin, a sin for you and also a sin for the child. The way to do is for you and me to get married, then everything will be all right."

She broke into hysterical laughter,

"Me marry you? Say, you're a bigger dummy'n I thought you was. Huh . . . I don't want a man that looks like a scarecrow."

"Maybe you want somebody that looks like Louie," he retorted. "Well, that is all right, but just the same he run away and left you, didn't he? As for me, I am no dude. I am a worker. And I got nice clothes besides. What do you want me to wear, perfume and have a cane to carry! You better be glad I don't do such things, or maybe I might leave you the way he done."

The girl began to whimper, rocking to and fro in her chair,

"Oh Christ A'mighty, Christ A'mighty, what'd I ever do to deserve this!"

"You done wrong," said Jencic gravely.

"That's right, throw it up to me. It's just what I expected."

"Ho! is that so? Well, you don't have to expect such a thing from me, I tell you that. I will never say anything about that Louie to you again, and I will be good to the little one and you, too, and not throw it up to you, either."

She was sniffing.

"We will get married and be happy like Krusack himself," he went on stoutly. "What if somebody makes a mistake! Everybody does the same thing some time. The way to do is to not think about it, and then go ahead the best you can."

He paused expectantly, but she had nothing to say, and so he continued,

"You and me can start out just like new. I got money, and now that I am second baker I will have some more. I belong to the union and Krusack is my friend. I make good wages. I save, too. I am in the habit by this time, because I always had a hard time and not much money. It is a good thing to get in such a habit when you are young, then you won't spend it for foolish things later on. But just the same, you will see how I can spend money for furniture, and clothes for the

wedding, and such as that. I will take care of you . . . and the little one also."

Teena blew her nose and shifted in her chair.

"What do you say?" asked Jencic. "Shall we get married?"

No answer.

"You must speak up," said he firmly. "It is not a good thing to let it go so long, because it won't be so you can go about later on. You will have to stop work, because I don't want them at the bakery to make fun. What do you say, Teena, will you get married to me?"

Silence.

"Yes," came the girl's sudden low hoarse whisper, "I . . . I will, I will," and then she broke into sobs.

## CHAPTER XXI

### I

"WELL, it is going to be like you said," began Jencic, and bent over his mixing trough, hiding that telltale face of his from his friend the head baker.

"Huh?" said Krusack.

"I've made up my mind to get married."

"You have! Well, that's fine . . . fine. Pick out a good girl and go after 'er. You'll be better off, just as I said so many times to you."

"The girl is already picked out."

"That so! Well, if you're sure you want her, ask her right off. When a man is ready to take the plunge he is ready, that is all."

"I have asked her."

"The devil you have! By golly, that's quick work. And she said 'all right'?"

"Yes."

"What's that? You mean it's actually settled!"

"Yes. It will be Sunday morning, early."

Krusack had been carrying on his share of this talk with casual indifference, because of the splitting headache he had somehow acquired on Saturday night, but when Jencic said that things were actually settled, and the wedding would occur on

Sunday morning, early, the head baker straightened up, very much alive again, and frankly incredulous,

"Jencic, what're you talkin' about? Are you lying about it?"

"No. It is the truth."

A great light spread in Krusack's face. He stepped over to his friend and gave him a blow on the back, exclaiming in the heartiest way imaginable,

"Bravo for you, my friend! I am tickled to death to hear about it. Now you won't have any more lonesome spells. I wish you luck, and your girl, too. What is her name? You have never told me."

"Her name is Teena."

Jencic bent low over his mixing trough as he pronounced that name, and it was well that he did so, otherwise he might have been considerably more than startled by the look on Krusack's face.

"Teena!" said the head baker, staring at him.

"Yes," said Jencic, low and gruffly. He kept his embarrassed eyes on his dough, his face now hot, now cold.

"You mean . . . you don't mean the girl in the pastry room?"

"Yes, she is the one."

Krusack turned back to his work with the air of a man who has been stunned. After a while he said slowly,

"Is that the girl you had the fight over, with the Turk?"

"Yes."

"So . . . it's that way, is it. . . . And you're going to marry her?"

"Yes."

"Is it all settled?" demanded Krusack quickly.

"Yes," said Jencic, with a sheepish grin, "it is all settled. We are going to buy the clothes next Saturday night. I will buy some wedding clothes for her, and some things for myself also. As for the papers and all that, Teena will arrange that, because such things are too much for me, and . . . Yes, it is all settled. It will be Sunday morning."

Their eyes met.

"What's the matter?" asked Jencic. "Is something the trouble with you?"

"No, no, I just don't know what to think, that is all. It is a surprise for me, that you should do a thing so sudden. I wasn't expecting such a thing."

"Ho! but that is one on you, ain't it! You didn't think I would do it so quick, did you? because I am so slow in everything else. But what will you think when I get married and come to your house to live in the lower part, like you said! I bet you will think I am not so slow as I look, eh!"

Krusack groaned.

"Are you sick?" said Jencic, "or maybe you just don't feel so good to-night."



"I guess that's it," muttered the head baker, and returned to his dough.

Jencic watched him with troubled eyes. It was not like Krusack to show so little energy, and so he said to him, very thoughtfully,

"Maybe you should have a mixing machine, after all. There is no good for you to wear yourself out."

"Don't talk about it," said the head baker, in a rough tone. "It will straighten out. Or if it don't . . ."

## II

Jencic was worried. He had never known his friend to be sick, and as for trouble, Krusack always rode the world as if it were a horse. Was the task of mixing dough by hand proving too much for him? It did not seem possible. True enough, the head baker was no longer young, but then he wasn't old, either. He was one of those men who give you the impression of boundless vitality. Only it did not look that way now, and so the next night Jencic said to him,

"You better let me mix all the dough to-night. I can do it. Then you won't get tired, like you did last time."

But Krusack would not hear of it. He scowled and muttered, and swore up and down that he felt all right—in fact, he had never felt better in his life than he felt to-night.

"That's good," said Jencic, and went to work, very much relieved.

"So you are going to get married?" exclaimed the head baker all at once.

"Yes," said Jencic, grinning like a fool.

He waited for Krusack to say some more, but the head baker had no more to say just then. Not until they were putting the first batch of loaves in the oven did he return to the subject,

"Sunday morning, did you say?"

"Sunday morning. The earlier the better, don't you think so?"

"Yes, but . . ."

Jencic looked at him uncertainly. It was not like Krusack to leave off with a "but." No, he was not so halting as all that. The head baker's tongue was nimble and his speech fluent, and such was the press of ideas within him that by custom he constructed fine long sentences, which, with a flourish at the end, invariably settled the matter as neatly as if he had driven a nail in it. To-night, however, he was labored and slow, with a "but" hanging out of his mouth.

"But what?" said Jencic.

"Well, what I mean is this," said Krusack carefully. "It is a fine thing to get married, and all that, but just the same a man has got to be careful that he gets the right kind of a wife. That is why, when I done it, I made sure I was getting a girl who was quiet and a good worker. She behaved

herself before we got married—no running around with other men, or anything like that, so I knew I was getting clean goods, and not getting a glove somebody else had been stretching. She was *clean*, and that's why she made me a good wife."

"Yes," said Jencic, nodding, "I bet that's the truth. You got a good wife, all right."

Krusack gave him a sharp glance and went on, "It is because the mother was clean that I got such nice little ones, don't you see that? Four nice little kids, nothing finer anywhere. I would not take any money for one of them. But if they was not really mine, I would go crazy. A man wants kids of his own, not somebody else's."

"That's true," said Jencic, sliding the pans on to the peel as fast as he could. "Kids are a fine thing, and you got some nice ones, too. It is because I saw yours that time that I begun to think how good it would be if I did not have to live alone any more. I thought it was a lot better to have a family myself, and have little ones about the house. That is why I am going to get married."

"But . . ."

Jencic grinned at him,

"But what?"

"Well, what I want to say is—are you sure of what you're doing?"

"Sure?"

"Yes—sure you want to get married."

Jencic looked at him in surprise,

"What makes you say that? Of course I want to get married. That is why I am going to do it!"

"But it's no joke, this married business. It is a serious thing when you get tied up to a woman. They are easy to take, but they are damn' hard to get rid of."

"Ho! what's that you say! Hard to get rid of? But why would a man want to do that? Look at you, you do not want to get rid of your wife, do you?"

"No, but *you* might. There is no telling. Such things happen."

"Well, I wouldn't do that," said Jencic stoutly. "I got my mind made up, and I know it will stay that way, too. It is all settled. I am lonesome the way it is now. If I did not know Teena maybe I would not mind about living alone, but . . . no, it must be the way it is. I won't change my mind. It is all settled."

Krusack said no more just then. They finished putting in the pans, and went back to the next batch of dough.

"What is the use of getting married so soon?" said the head baker.

"What is the good of waiting?" said Jencic.

"Well, it is so sudden—I can't get used to the idea. Why don't you wait a month? That will let you see how things stand."

Jencic was puzzled.

"How things stand!" he repeated. "What does

that mean? Things stand as they stand, that is all I can see. Teena is willing and I am willing, so we have settled it. She has got her eye on some of her wedding clothes already, and when Saturday night comes we are going to get the rest of them. So that's the way things stand."

"But—"

"Ho!" cried Jencic, and burst into laughter, "what is the matter that you are so full of 'buts'! If you keep up like this, I will have to call you Jencic, because that is the way I do most times—but—but—like that. And now you are the one to do it, and I am the one to speak quick. It is because I feel good, I guess. I wish you would feel that way, too. What is this 'but' business! Do you think I shouldn't get married?"

Krusack looked at him, pondering, hesitating, whereupon a flash of understanding came into Jencic's face.

"Maybe it is because you think I can't support a wife!" he exclaimed. "Well, as for that, I—I am making good wages. I know how to save. Even if Teena don't work, we can get along. Of course it will cost a lot of money for the wedding—clothes and the rest of it—but she says it must be that way, and after we are married they don't have to be such a waste. Besides, I am good and strong. I never get sick hardly, so I don't need to lose time at my job. . . . But you think maybe I can't support a family, do you?"

"No . . . that ain't it."

"Then what is it you mean?"

But Krusack would not answer him.

### III

Jencic thought it over for a few days, and then one night he said to the head baker, bluntly,

"You are the one that got me to thinking about getting married in the first place, ain'tchu? The first I ever thought about doing it was the time I come to your house. It was raining and I was wet and I felt so lonesome, and everything was so fine at your house—the cabbage soup, and the children, and all—and you said I should get married myself. So I begun to think it over, and you kept saying how I should have a wife, and like that. It is because of what you said that I am going to get married."

Krusack said nothing.

"And now it seems like you don't want me to get married," continued Jencic. "You say 'but this' and 'but that' and such things, and when I talk about having the rent of the place under you where you live, you don't say a word. I don't know what the matter is, but I want to know. Let us come face to face with what we got to say. That is the best way. Don't you like Teena, or what is it?"

Krusack shrugged his shoulders, growling,



"What difference does that make! I am not the one that is getting married to her."

"Well," said Jencic thoughtfully, "that's so . . . but just the same if you don't like her we can't have any good times together, eating and drinking and all that. It is bad for my friend and my wife not to get along with each other. But why should it be that way? What have you got against her?"

"Aw," said Krusack, "there's no use making you feel bad with what I think."

"I feel bad already. So let us talk about it. What is it you don't like about Teena?"

Krusack was silent for a long time. Finally he said,

"Well, who is this Teena, anyway? Where did she come from?"

"I dunno, but what difference does that make? You don't know where I come from, either."

"She's some kind of a wop," muttered the head baker. "Maybe Dago. I don't like that. People like that are so hot blooded, they do what they shouldn't do. I wouldn't marry a Dago."

"Teena ain't no Dago, she's American."

"Bah!"

"It's the truth. And even if she wasn't, I could get papers for her from that Councilman, O'Brien, like he got for me. So anyway she can be just as much American as I am, maybe more, because she learns quicker and can read good."

"That's just the trouble," retorted Krusack,

"because it shouldn't be that way. It is all right for a man to make hisself a citizen, because he works with American things, but a woman don't have to get out like he does, so it is better for her not to be like American women, because they get too bold and free with themselves. The man should be American, but his wife should stick to the Old Country ways—and behave."

"Behave! Don't you think Teena behaves?"

"Well, she ain't got any too good a reputation."

"What is that reputation!" said Jencic, irritably. "I don't feel like taking such big words into my stomach."

"I mean people say bad things about her."

Jencic was getting angry,

"Look, now, I am going to get married to Teena, so you better not say such things about her."

"I'm not sayin' 'em. It's other people that say 'em."

"What do they say?"

"Aw, come now," said the head baker in a confidential tone, "you know what is the trouble with her."

A flush crept slowly into Jencic's cheeks.

"So that is what you got on your mind," he muttered. "Well, I tell you something. If anybody else should say that to me, I would bust in his face for him. But I would not put a finger on you, because . . . you are Krusack, that is why."

The head baker looked away, his face stiff.

"I know all about Teena," continued Jencic heavily, "more'n you do. It is true she done something she shouldn't do, but after we get married it will be all right. Everybody makes mistakes. What if people didn't forget such mistakes, then everybody would be mad at everybody else, and nobody would have even one friend. Teena made a mistake, all right, but maybe your wife did, too."

"What!"

"Sure. Maybe not the same kind, but a mistake just the same. A mistake is a mistake."

"Some mistakes are worse'n others."

Jencic narrowed his eyes. "We better stop talking," he said hotly. "It don't do no good."

"That's how I feel, too," said Krusack, and turned away.

#### IV

Friday night.

Jencic and Krusack, working side by side, silently brooding, speaking only at long intervals, and then merely because of the bread.

One batch of dough after another, a round of cakes, and finally the last of the loaves come out of the oven. They clean up, Krusack doing his part, Jencic doing his. A ray of sunlight makes its way through the floury window. The head baker turns out the electric lights.

But he does not look at Jencic.

And Jencic does not look at him.

The whistle blows. Alex the helper gets his hat and coat and hurries out. Everybody is leaving. The week's work has come to an end. Jencic takes his hat and starts for the door, dragging one leg after the other, like one who is heavily laden. Krusack is watching him. The head baker leans against his work bench. He is a proud fellow, but it is too much to think that his friend is to get married before he sees him again, and leaving like this, besides. Too much for any man to bear, and so when Jencic is almost to the door and away he cries out,

"It's true, what you say—everybody makes mistakes."

Jencic halted. But he did not turn. Old stubbornness, he just stood there, with his back to his friend.

"A mistake is a mistake," exclaimed the head baker, "and if we didn't overlook such things, it's just as you say, there wouldn't be any living in the world. As for me, I can overlook things."

Jencic turned round.

"Well," said Krusack, with a strange smile, "tomorrow you get married, so I wish everything good for you, and Teena, also. You are lucky to get such a pretty wife. She is pretty, ain't she?"

"Yes," said Jencic slowly.

"I was looking at her only last night," continued the head baker. "She was telling jokes to the girls

in the pastry room, and smiling and showing her teeth. Why, she has got teeth that are as white as sugar in the bag!"

"Ho!" said Jencic, "that is a fact. I never seen such white teeth as she's got. She's got some pretty hair, too."

"Hair! well, I should say so! Just the kind of hair I like, too, black and curly, with lots of life to it—like my mustaches, only they ain't got no curl."

"Sure," said Jencic, with a grin and a nod, "that's so."

"You are going to get a wife with a good shape, too. I can see for myself she is built like a trotting mare, not like some old plug. I know girls that are thick and clumsy like a barrel, so that they make the floor shake when they walk, and maybe some day fall down stairs and break their neck. But Teena ain't like that; she is light and slender as a bird."

"She is strong, though," said Jencic proudly. "She can do a lot of work."

"I *bet* she can, at that, she is so quick. That is the kind of a girl that could learn music."

"Learn music!" said Jencic, coming a step closer to his friend. "Well, as for that, she don't have to learn, she knows how already."

"Is that so!"

"Sure, she can play on the concertina. Sometimes she makes such tunes you can't sleep after-

ward, for thinking about them. If you never heard her play maybe . . . well, it might be that. . . .”

“Why not! If we live in the same house, she can play for us, and maybe we can have a dance or some other kind of a good time. As soon as the windows get fixed you must see the landlord. He is an American fella. His name is Regan. I will talk to him for you. They better do it quick, though, because you will want to move in pretty soon, eh?”

“Yes—sure—we would like to move in soon as we can.”

Krusack went to his coat and took out a bottle. He was smiling, just like his old self once more,

“Well, when there is a wedding there must be something to drink. Take one.”

Jencic drank, and when he took the bottle down from his lips he said apologetically,

“I wish we was going to have a big wedding, with drinking and all, but Teena says she wants it quiet.”

“Don’t blame ’er,” said Krusack, before he thought.

“Huh?”

“I said, why have a fuss? It ain’t necessary.”

“But everybody always has a feast, when there is a wedding.”

“Well,” said Krusack, struck with an idea, “so can you—after it is over. You get yourself married, then you and Teena come to my house and



we will have a feast that is a feast. By God, that's a good idea. That's what we'll do. I will make a wedding cake with my own hands, with your name on it in chocolate letters, what do you say? I will see if I can't make some springerle, too, and a couple o' plates of honey kuchen. Say, we will have some Bohemian kollatschen, too. They are just the thing for a wedding. What do you want them to be filled with, eggs and almonds?"

"I—"

"Or maybe you would like them better if I put in cheese-filling. That is good, too.

"Oh, as for that—"

"Well, I'll make some of each, I guess, then you can take your pick, and maybe both, besides."

"That will be fine," stammered Jencic. "I will bring all the stuff to drink, though. If we can have a good time afterwards I won't care so much how we are married. Teena wants us to get married very quiet, but I think she would like to have a feast after it is over. I think maybe she was going to have a big wedding with that Turk, and now that she is going to marry me she wants it quiet. I guess that is it, all right. But anyhow she has got no use for him any more, it is all me and her. When I said something about him the other day she got mad and cried, and said she didn't want to hear his name any more. So that is settled for good."

"Take another swig," said Krusack hurriedly.

"Have a good one this time. Weddings don't come very often."

They drank again.

"Will you come be a witness for me?" said Jencic.

"Sure. Where is it to be?"

"At the church. I will find out what time, from Teena."

"What are you shaking about?" demanded the head baker.

"I don't know. Maybe I am scared. I been awake two nights now, thinking about getting married. I am scared to meet the priest."

"Bah! you won't even see him!" and Krusack laughed. "Well, take another drink, that'll steady you."

Another drink apiece. Krusack put the empty bottle back in his coat. They fell silent. The sound of an awakening world drifted in to them: horses trampling, the grate of wagon wheels, windows opening, voices. . . .

"This time to-morrow you will be married to her," said Krusack.

"Yes."

## CHAPTER XXII

### I

SUNDAY morning, very early.

A gray light filters in through the window of Jencic's room, as if to awaken him.

But there is no need of that. Jencic is awake. He has been awake all night, watching the stars pale and the moon ride west, and now that it is dawn he puts back the blankets and gets to his feet.

Slowly he turns and looks at the bed. It is a skin which he is shedding. To-day is his wedding day. No more sleeping alone for Jencic, no more of that stark gloom which comes upon him with too much solitude. From now on things will be different. . . .

He peeps out the window. Jencic has no clock, but no matter, he has eyes, he can see that the night is past. To be sure, there is a blanket of mist over everything, yet it is lifting . . . lifting. Barren looking stuff, that mist, nevertheless it is a kind of matrix, out of which will presently issue the warm life of a new day, Jencic's wedding day.

A bit of water from his pitcher and he begins to shave, stooping to the level of his mirror and examining his face with minute care, as he scrapes

this way and that. He does not look himself in the eye. Those gray eyes of Jencic's are filled with mist this morning, mist and luminous trembling light, as if perhaps they are on the point of leaving off with fog and confusion. Better not to look into such eyes, but go ahead shaving and dressing. . . .

Finally he is all ready, this strange and unaccustomed Jencic. His workaday clothes lie in a heap on the floor. The garments he has on are new. They fret him at the neck and arm pits, and places like that. Also, they smell of moth balls. He has on a new necktie, and in addition a new hat. The hat fits him in rather insecure fashion. There he stands, trying to see around behind himself, and find out how he is going to appear to the world.

Soft steps come up the stairs, whereupon his eyes widen and his face grows stiff. He swallows as if in pain, once and then again and a third time. A big hand goes up to his collar—but he does not loosen it—it must be borne with. Suddenly there is a tap at the door,

“Jencic.”

“What?”

“Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

“Then come on. It's time.”

The steps go back down stairs, Jencic listening to them with throbbing ears. His face has turned pale; it is covered with sweat; for a moment he turns it upward, as though some long-forgotten

hand were leading him back to prayer. Yet he does not pray, he merely gulps, and goes slowly down stairs.

Teena is waiting in the hall, the half-lit hall in which she stands out like a ghost, silently waiting in her white garments, her face unreal and insubstantial against the black rim of her hair. Very slowly Jencic comes up to her. He avoids her eyes. A species of awe is descending upon the man. Work is his portion. But this is something else, something unfamiliar, something lacking in the solid reassurance with which he has always associated his daily labor. This present time is a magical interlude; for the moment he is breathing another air, and such an air that he is faint from it.

"Don't shake," says Teena. "What's there to shake about!"

She goes down the stairs. Jencic follows her. They come into the street, and turn and go off in the direction of the church.

It is still early. The air is clear and soft, and very tranquil. The mist has gone away, and now the heavens stand revealed as a dome of scintillating light, dotted here and there with fleecy salmon-colored clouds. Against this tinted sky rises the spire of the church, terminating in a cross. Jencic sees it, and when he and Teena get a little closer he likewise sees the door of the church, and the steps, and Krusack, Krusack his friend, Krusack his pillar of strength, waiting there with his

strong fine words and his hearty handclasp. And then from the high steeple up against the splendid shining sky the holy bells begin to ring, pealing and calling to Jencic, and making such a musical thunder that his heart is riven.

"Teena," he whispers, "what makes me feel this way? It must be because I am beginning to believe."

"Believe in what?"

"I don't know," says Jencic, with his eyes straight ahead, and his feet carrying him on and on toward the church, "only that is the way I feel . . . I believe, that is all . . . I just believe . . . I believe. . . ."

THE END









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